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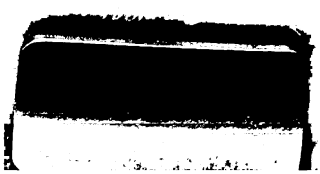

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THEOLOGICAL AND EXPOSITORY

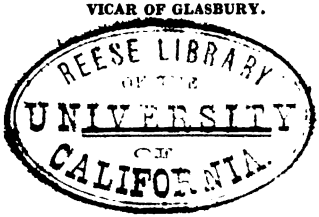
LECTURES.

BY

ROBERT LEIGHTON, D.D.
ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW.

A NEW EDITION.

EDITED BY THE REV. C. BRADLEY,
VICAR OF GLASBURY.



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CONTENTS.

Page

Biographical Sketch of the Author..... v

THEOLOGICAL LECTURES.

Lect.

1. The Introduction..... 3
2. Of Happiness, its Name and Nature, and the Desire of it implanted in the human Heart..... 8
3. Of the Happiness of Man, and that it is really to be found 12
4. Of human Felicity, and that it cannot be found either in the Earth or earthly Things..... 16
5. Of the Immortality of the Soul..... 22
6. Of the Happiness of the Life to come..... 29
7. Of the Being of God..... 34
8. Of the Worship of God, Providence, and the Law given to Man..... 44
9. Of the Pleasure and Utility of Religion..... 49
10. Of the Decrees of God..... 53
11. Of the Creation of the World..... 57
12. Of the Creation of Man..... 65
13. Of Providence..... 71
14. Of Christ the Saviour..... 78
15. Of Regeneration..... 82
16. Of Regeneration..... 91
17. Of true Felicity and Eternal Punishment..... 98
18. Of the Christian Religion, and that it is the true Way to Happiness..... 103

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Lect. Page
19. Holiness the only Happiness on this Earth..... 109
20. Of our Happiness, particularly that it lies in God, who alone can direct us to the true Way of attaining to it; that this Way he has discovered in the sacred Scriptures, the divine Authority whereof is asserted and illustrated 113
21. Of the Divine Attributes..... 122
22. How to regulate Life according to the Rules of Religion 126
23. Of Purity of Life..... 131
24. Exhortation before the Communion 135
An Exhortation to the Students..... 140

EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

PRINTED FROM THE ARCHBISHOP'S MSS.

Lectures on Psalm XXXIX. 147
Lectures on Psalm VIII..... 177
Lectures on Isaiah, VI..... 188
Lectures on Romans, XII. 203

TRANSLATED BY DR. DODDRIDGE.

Lectures on Psalm IV..... 217
Lectures on Psalm XXXII..... 236
Lectures on Psalm CXXX..... 248

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

The father of Archbishop Leighton was one of those conscientious but somewhat violent men, who in the calamitous times of Charles I. brought themselves under the displeasure of the star-chamber and experienced its cruelty. About the year 1613 he left Scotland his native country, and took up his residence in London, where in 1629 he published two works, the one entitled "The Looking-glass of Holy War," and the other "Zion's Plea or Appeal to the Parliament." The freedom or, as it might perhaps be justly termed, the virulence with which he attacked the advocates of episcopacy in these works, was not allowed to pass with impunity. A most cruel punishment was awarded him. He was severely whipped, and twice put in the pillory; his ears were cut off, his nose slit, his face branded, and, in addition to these barbarities, he underwent an imprisonment for eleven years.

In the year 1613 his son Robert, the future Archbishop, was born. Of the early years of this revered man we know but little. After he had finished his academical studies, he spent some years on the continent, where he seems to have remained till 1643. About this time he settled in Scotland, and was ordained, according to the presbyterian form, minister of Newbottle near Edinburgh. The subsequent events of his life were very diversified. The times were troublous, and he shared in the general agitation. The most enlarged account of his character and actions will be found in a life of him written by Dr. Jerment, and prefixed to a late edition of his works. The following sketch is extracted chiefly from the Biographical Dictionary edited by the judicious Mr. Chalmers.

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In his charge near Edinburgh Dr. Leighton remained several years, and was most assiduous in discharging the various duties of his office. He did not however conceive it to be any part of that office to add to the distractions of that unhappy period, by making the pulpit the vehicle of political opinions. His object was to exert his parishioners to live in charity, and not to trouble themselves with religious and political disputes. But such was not the common practice. It was at that period the custom of the presbytery to inquire of the several brethren twice a year "Whether they preached to the times?" Leighton, upon being thus interrogated, is said on one occasion to have answered, "If all the brethren have preached to the times, may not one poor brother be suffered to preach on eternity?" Such moderation could not fail to give offence; and finding his labours of no service, he retired to a life of privacy. His mind was not however indifferent to what was passing in the political world. He was one of those who dreaded the downfall of the monarchy, and the subsequent evils of a republican tyranny; and having probably declared with frankness his sentiments on these subjects, he was solicited by his friends, and particularly by his brother Sir Elisha Leighton, to change his connexions. He yielded to their advice, and for this part of his conduct was denounced by the presbyterians as an apostate, and welcomed by the episcopalians as a convert. In his first outset however, it is denied that he was a thorough presbyterian, or in his second entirely an episcopalian; and and it is certain that his becoming the latter could not be imputed to motives of ambition or interest, for episcopacy was at that time the profession of the minority and extremely unpopular. His design however of retiring to a life of privacy was prevented by a circumstance, which proved the high opinion entertained of his integrity, learning, and piety. The office of principal in the university of Edinburgh becoming vacant soon after Leighton's resignation of his ministerial charge, the magistrates who had the presentation to this office, unanimously chose him to fill the chair, and pressed his acceptance of it by urging that he might thereby be of great service to the church, without taking any part in public measures. Such a motive to a man of his moderation was irresistible. He accordingly accepted the office, and executed the duties of it for ten years with great reputation. It was the custom then for the principal to lecture to the students of theology in Latin, and Leighton's

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lectures delivered at this period, which are extant both in Latin and English, are very striking proofs of the ability and assiduity with which he discharged this part of his duty.

After the death of the king, Dr. Leighton sometimes visited London during the vacations, but was disgusted with the proceedings there, and conceived a particular dislike to the conduct of the independents, as well as to their form of church government. He made several excursions likewise to Flanders, that he might observe the actual state of the Romish church on the spot, and carried on a correspondence with some of his relations at Douay, who were in popish orders, but with the exception of some *Jansenists*, of whom he entertained a favourable opinion, his general aversion to popish divines and popery appears to have been increased rather than diminished by his experience abroad.

When Charles II. after the restoration determined to establish episcopacy in Scotland, Dr. Leighton was persuaded to accept a Bishoprick. This his presbyterian biographers seem to consider as a part of his conduct which is not to be reconciled with his general character of wisdom and caution. They deduce however from the following circumstances, that he did not enter cordially into the plan, and was even somewhat averse to it. "He chose," says Dr. Jerment, "the most obscure and least lucrative see, the diocess of Dumblane; disapproved of the feasting at the time of consecration, and testified plainly against it; objected to the title of Lord; refused to accompany the other Scotch bishops in their pompous entry into Edinburgh, hastening privately to Dumblane. He did not accept of the invitation to parliament, almost the only time he took his seat there being for the purpose of urging lenity toward the presbyterians. He detested all violent measures. He persecuted no man, upbraided no man; held little correspondence with his brethren, and incurred their deep resentment by his reserve and strictness. In the end he acknowledged that Providence frowned both on the scheme and the instruments, and confined himself to his diocess."

Now all this might be true, and yet not interfere with the conclusion, that Dr. Leighton saw nothing in the character and office of a Bishop, which could hinder the success of the gospel. On the contrary, he exhibited such an example of pious diligence, as could not be exceeded by the divines of any church; and although during his holding this see, the presby-

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terians were persecuted with the greatest severity in other dioceses, not one individual was molested at Dumblane on account of his religious principles. But as he had no power beyond his own boundaries, and could not approve the conduct of Sharp and others of his brethren, he certainly became in time dissatisfied with his situation and, it is possible, with himself for having accepted it. In an address to his clergy in 1665, not four years after his settlement at Dumblane, he intimated to them that it was his intention to resign, assigning as a reason that he was weary of contentions.

Before taking this step however, he had the courage to try the effect of a fair representation of the state of matters to the king, and, notwithstanding his natural diffidence, went to London, and being graciously received by Charles, detailed to him the violent and cruel proceedings in Scotland; protested against any concurrence in such measures; declared that being a Bishop he was in some measure accessary to the rigorous deeds of others in supporting episcopacy, and requested permission to resign his Bishoprick. The king heard him with attention and with apparent sorrow for the state of Scotland; assured him that lenient measures should be adopted; but positively refused to accept his resignation, Leighton appears to have credited his Majesty's professions, and returned home in hopes that the violence of persecution was over; but finding himself disappointed, he made a second attempt in 1667, and was more urgent with the king than before, although still without effect.

It may seem strange that Leighton, who was so disgusted with the proceedings of his brethren as now to think it a misfortune to belong to the order, and who had so earnestly tendered his resignation, should at no great distance of time, in 1670, be persuaded to remove from his sequestered diocess of Dumblane to the more important province of Glasgow. This however may be accounted for to his honour, and not to the discredit of the court which urged him to accept the Archbishoprick. The motive of the king and his ministers was, that Leighton was the only man qualified to allay the discontent which prevailed in the west of Scotland; and Leighton thought he might now have an opportunity of bringing forward a scheme of accommodation between the episcopalians and presbyterians, which had been for years the object of his study and the wish of his heart. The king examined this

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scheme, and promised his aid. It had all the features of moderation, and if moderation had been the characteristic of either party, might have been successful. Leighton wished that each party, for the sake of peace should abate something of its opinions as to the mode of church government and worship; that the power of the Bishops should be reduced considerably, and that few of the ceremonies of public worship should be retained; that the Bishop should only be perpetual moderator or president in clerical assemblies, and should have no negative voice; and that every question should be determined by the majority of presbyters. Both parties however were too much exasperated and too jealous of each other to yield a single point, and the scheme came to nothing, for which failure various reasons may be seen in the history of the times. The only circumstance not so well accounted for is, that Charles II. and his ministers should still persist in retaining a man in the high office of Bishop, whose plans they disliked, and who formed a striking contrast to his brethren whom they supported.

Disappointed in his scheme of comprehension, Archbishop Leighton endeavoured to execute his office with his usual care, doing all in his power to reform the clergy, to promote piety among the people, to suppress violence, and to soothe the minds of the presbyterians. For this last purpose he held conferences with them at Glasgow, Paisley, and Edinburgh, on their principles and on his scheme of accommodation, but without effect. The parties could not be brought to mutual indulgence, and far less to religious concord. Finding his new situation therefore more and more disagreeable, he again determined to resign his dignity, and went to London for that purpose in the summer of 1673. The king, although he still refused to accept his resignation, gave a written engagement to allow him to retire after the trial of another year, and that time being expired and all hope of uniting the different parties having vanished, his resignation was accepted. He now retired to Broadhurst in Sussex, where his sister resided, the widow of Edward Lightmaker, Esq., and here he lived in great privacy, dividing his time between study, devotion, and acts of benevolence, with occasional preaching. In 1697 he very unexpectedly received a letter written in the king's own hand, requesting him to go to Scotland and promote concord among the contending parties; but it does not appear that he

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complied with his Majesty's pleasure. It is certain that he never again visited Scotland, nor intermeddled with ecclesiastical affairs, but remained quietly in his retirement until near his death. This event however did not take place at Broadhurst. Although he had enjoyed this retirement almost without interruption for ten years, he was unexpectedly brought to London to see his friends. The reason of this visit is not very clearly explained, nor is it of great importance; but it appears that he had been accustomed to express a wish that he might die from home and at an inn; and this wish was gratified, for he died at the Bell-inn, in Warwick-lane, far apart from his relations, whose concern he thought might discompose his mind. He was confined to his room about a week, and to his bed only three days. Bishop Burnet and other of his friends attended him constantly during his illness, and witnessed his tranquil departure. He expired Feb. 1, 1684, in the seventy-first year of his age. By his express desire, his remains were conveyed to Broadhurst, and interred in the church of that place, and a monument of plain marble, inscribed with his name, office, and age, was erected at the expense of his sister.

Archbishop Leighton is celebrated by all who have written his life or incidentally noticed him, as a striking example of unfeigned piety, extensive learning, and unbounded liberality. Bishop Burnet, in his History of his own Times, makes frequent and the most honourable mention of him. "He had," says he, "the greatest command of the purest Latin that ever I knew in any man. He was a master both of Greek and Hebrew, and of the whole compass of theological learning, chiefly in the study of the Scriptures; but that which excelled all the rest was, he was possessed with the highest and noblest sense of Divine things that ever I saw in any man. He had no regard to his person, unless it was to mortify it by a constant low diet that was like a perpetual fast. He had a contempt both of wealth and reputation. He seemed to have the lowest thoughts of himself possible, and to desire that all other persons should think as meanly of him, as he did himself. He bore all sorts of ill usage and reproach like a man that took pleasure in it. He had so subdued the natural heat of his temper, that in a great variety of accidents, and in a course of twenty-two years intimate conversation with him, I never observed the least sign of passion but upon one

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occasion. He brought himself into so composed a gravity, that I never saw him laugh, and but seldom smile; and he kept himself in such a constant recollection, that I do not remember that I ever heard him say one idle word. There was a visible tendency in all he said to raise his own mind and those he conversed with to serious reflection. He seemed to be in a perpetual meditation, and through the whole course of his life was strict and ascetical, yet he had nothing of the sourness of temper that generally possesses men of that sort. He was the freest from superstition, of censuring others, or of imposing his own methods on them possible, so that he did not so much as recommend them to others. He said there was a diversity of temper, and every man was to watch over his own, and to turn it in the best manner he could. His thoughts were lively, oft out of the way and surprising, yet just and genuine; and he had laid together in his memory the greatest treasure of the best and wisest of all the ancient sayings of the heathens as well as Christians, that I have ever known any man master of; and he used them in the aptest manner possible. He had been bred up with the greatest aversion imaginable to the whole frame of the Church of England. From Scotland his father sent him to travel. He spent some years in France, and spoke that language like one born there. He came afterwards and settled in Scotland, and had presbyterian ordination; but he quickly broke through the prejudices of his education. His preaching had a sublimity both of thought and expression in it. The grace and gravity of his pronunciation were such, that few heard him without a sensible emotion. I am sure I never did. His style was rather too fine, but there was a majesty and beauty in it that left so deep an impression, that I cannot yet forget the sermons I heard him preach thirty years ago; and yet with this he seemed to look on himself as so ordinary a preacher, that while he had a cure, he was ready to employ all others; and when he was a Bishop, he chose to preach to small auditories, and would never give notice beforehand. He had indeed a very low voice, and so could not be heard by a great crowd. I bear still the greatest veneration for the memory of that man, that I do for any person; and reckon my early knowledge of him, and my long and intimate conversation with him that continued to his death for twenty-three years, among the greatest blessings of my life, and for which I know

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I must give an account to God in the great day in a most particular manner."

In the conclusion of his Pastoral Care Bishop Burnet takes another opportunity of dwelling upon the character of this inestimable man: "I have now laid together," says he, "with great simplicity, what has been the chief subject of my thoughts for above thirty years. I was formed to them by a Bishop that had the greatest elevation of soul, the largest compass of knowledge, the most mortified and heavenly disposition, that I ever yet saw in mortal; that had the greatest parts as well as virtue, with the perfectest humility that I ever saw in man; and had a sublime strain in preaching, with so grave a gesture, and such a majesty both of thought, of language, and of pronunciation, that I never once saw a wandering eye where he preached, and have seen whole assemblies often melt in tears before him; and of whom I can say with great truth, that in a free and frequent conversation with him for above two-and-twenty years, I never knew him say a word that had not a direct tendency to edification; and I never once saw him in any other temper than that which I wished to be in the last moments of my life."

Archbishop Leighton's Works have been published in four volumes octavo. The chief of them, besides his Theological Lectures, are A Practical Commentary on the First Epistle of Saint Peter—Sermons—An Exposition of the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments—A Catechism—Meditations on the Psalms—and A Defence of Moderate Episcopacy.

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THEOLOGICAL LECTURES.

BY

ROBERT LEIGHTON, D. D.

ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW.

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THEOLOGICAL LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

THE INTRODUCTION.

WITH little strength I undertake a great work, or rather, with the least abilities, I venture upon a task which is of all others the greatest and most important. Among the various undertakings of men, can an instance be given of one more sublime than an intention to form the human mind anew after the divine image? Yet it will, I doubt not, be universally acknowledged, that this is the true end and design, not only of ministers in their several congregations, but also of professors of divinity in schools. And though, in most respects, the ministerial office is evidently superior to that of professors of theology in colleges, in one respect the other seems to have the preference, as it is, at least for the most part, the business of the former to instruct the common sort of men, the ignorant and illiterate; while it is the work of the latter to season with heavenly doctrine the minds of select societies of youth, who have had a learned education, and are devoted to a studious life; many of whom, it is hoped, will, by the divine blessing, become preachers of the same salutary doctrine themselves. And surely this ought to be a powerful motive with all those who, by the divine dispensation, are employed in such a work, to exert themselves with the greater life and spirit in the discharge of their duty; especially when they consider, that those Christian instructions and seeds of true piety, which they instil into the tender minds of their pupils, will by them be spread far and wide, and, in due time, conveyed, as it were, by so many canals and aqueducts, to many parts of the Lord's vineyard. Plutarch employs an argument of this kind, to prevail with the philosophers to exert themselves in the

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instruction of princes and great men, rather than with a haughty sullenness to avoid their company; "For thus," says he, "you will find a short way to be useful to many." And, to be sure, he that conveys the principles of virtue and wisdom into the minds of the lower classes of men or the illiterate, whatever progress his disciples may make, employs his time and talents only for the advantage of his pupils; but he that forms the minds of magistrates and great men, or such as are intended for high and exalted stations, by improving one single person, becomes a benefactor to large and numerous societies. "Every physician of generous principles," as Plutarch expresses it, "would have an uncommon ambition to cure an eye, intended to watch over many persons and to convey the sense of seeing to numbers; and a musical intrument-maker would, with uncommon pleasure, exert his skill in perfecting a harp, if he knew that it was to be employed by the hands of Amphion, and, by the force of its music, to draw stones together for building the walls of Thebes." A learned and ingenious author, alluding to this fable and applying it to our present purpose, calls professors of theology in schools makers of harps for building the walls of a far more famed and beautiful city, meaning the heavenly Jerusalem, in such manner, that the stones of this building being truly and, without a fable, living, and charmed by the pleasant harmony of the gospel, come of their own accord to take their places in the wall.

I am not so little acquainted with myself, as to entertain the least hope of success in so great a work by my own strength and abilities; but, while I humbly depend upon the divine goodness and favour, I have no reason to despair; for in the hand of Omnipotence, all instruments are alike. Nor can it be questioned that he, who made all things out of nothing, can produce any change he pleases in his creatures that are already made. He who gives *life, and breath, and all things*, can easily strengthen the weak, and give riches in abundance to the poor and needy. Our emptiness only serves to lay us open to, and attract the fulness of him "who fills all things, and is over all; who gives wisdom to the mind, and prevents its irregular sallies."

Under his auspices, therefore, we are to aspire to true

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and saving wisdom, and to try to raise ourselves above this sublunary world. For it is not my intention to perplex you with curious questions, and to lead you through the thorny paths of disputation; but, if I had any share of that excellent art, it would be my delight to direct your way through the easy and pleasant paths of righteousness to a life of endless felicity, and be myself your companion in that blessed pursuit. I would take pleasure to kindle in your souls the most ardent desires and fervent love of heavenly things; and, to use the expression of a great divine, add "wings to your souls, to snatch them away from this world, and restore them to God." For, if I may be allowed to speak with freedom, most part of the notions that are treated of in theological schools, that are taught with great pomp and ostentation, and disputed with vast bustle and noise, may possibly have the sharpness of thorns, but they have also their barrenness: they may prick and tear, but they can afford no solid nourishment to the minds of men. *No man ever gathered grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles.* "To what purpose," says A Kempis, "dost thou reason profoundly concerning the Trinity, if thou art without humility, and thereby displeasest that Trinity?" And St. Augustine, upon these words of Isaiah, *I am the Lord that teacheth thee to profit*, observes with great propriety, that the prophet here mentions utility in opposition to subtility. Such are the principles I would wish to communicate to you; and it is my earnest desire and fervent prayer, that while I, according to my measure of strength, propose them to your understanding, he who sits in heaven and yet condescends to instruct the hearts of men on this earth, may effectually impress them upon your minds.

But that you may be capable of this supernatural light and heavenly instruction, it is, first of all, absolutely necessary, that your minds be called off from foreign objects and turned in upon themselves; for, as long as your thoughts are dispersed and scattered in pursuit of vanity and insignificant trifles, he that would lay before them the principles and precepts of this spiritual wisdom, would commit them, like the sibyl's prophecies that were written on loose leaves of trees, to the mercy of the inconstant winds, and thereby render them entirely useless. It is

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certainly a matter of great difficulty and requires uncommon art, to fix the thoughts of men, especially of young men and boys, and turn them in upon themselves. We read in the parable of the gospel concerning the prodigal son, that, first of all, *he came to himself*, and then returned to his father. It is certainly a very considerable step towards conversion to God, to have the mind fixed upon itself, and disposed to think seriously of its own immediate concerns; which the pious St. Bernard excellently expresses in this prayer: "May I," says he, "return from external objects to my own inward concerns, and from inferior objects rise to those of a superior nature." I should look upon it as no small happiness, if, out of this whole society, I could but gain one, but wish earnestly I could prevail with many, and still more ardently that I could send you all away, fully determined to entertain more serious and secret thoughts than ever you had before, with regard to your immortal state and eternal concerns. But how vain are the thoughts of men! What a darkness overclouds their minds! It is the great complaint of God concerning his people, that *they have not a heart to understand*. It is at once the great disgrace and misery of mankind, that they live without forethought. That brutish thoughtlessness, pardon the expression, or, to speak more intelligibly, want of consideration, is the death and ruin of souls. And the ancients observe, with great truth and justice, that "a thoughtful mind is the spring and source of every good thing."

It is the advice of the psalmist, that we should converse much with ourselves—an advice, indeed, which is regarded by few; for the greatest part of mankind are no where greater strangers than at home. But it is my earnest request to you, that you would be intimately acquainted with yourselves, and, as becomes persons devoted to a studious life, be much at home, much in your own company, and very often engaged in serious conversation with yourselves. Think gravely—To what purpose do I live? Whither am I going? Ask thyself—Hast thou any fixed and determined purpose, any end that thou pursuest with steadfastness? The principles I have embraced under the name of the Christian Religion, the things I have so often heard about a future state and life and death eternal, are

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they true or false? If they are true, as we all absolutely profess to believe they are, then, to be sure, the greatest and most important matters of this world are vain and even less than vanity itself: all our knowledge is but ignorance, our riches poverty, our pleasure bitterness, and our honours vile and dishonourable. How little do those men know, who are ambitious of glory, what it really is, and how to be attained! Nay, they eagerly catch at the empty shadow of it, while they avoid and turn their backs upon that glory which is real, substantial, and everlasting. The happiness of good men in the life to come is not only infinitely above all our expressions, but even beyond our most enlarged thoughts. By comparing, however, great things with small, we attain some faint notion of these exalted and invisible blessings, from the earthly and visible enjoyments of this world. In this respect, even the holy scriptures descend to the weakness of our capacities, and, as the Hebrews express it, "the law of God speaks the language of the children of men." They speak of this celestial life under the representations of a heritage, of riches, of a kingdom, and a crown, but with uncommon epithets, and such as are by no means applicable to any earthly glory or opulence, however great. It is an inheritance, but one that is *incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;* a kingdom, but one that can never be shaken, much less ruined; which can never be said of the thrones of this sublunary world, as evidently appears from the histories of all nations and our own recent experience. Here, ye sons of Adam, a covetous and ambitious race, here is room for a laudable avarice; here are motives to excite your ambition, and, at the same time, the means of satisfying it to the full. But it must be acknowledged, that the belief of these things is far from being common. What a rare attainment is faith, seeing that among the prodigious crowds of those who profess to believe in this world, one might justly cry out, "Where is a true believer to be found?" That man shall never persuade me, that he believes the truth and certainty of heavenly enjoyments, who cleaves to this earth, nay, who does not scorn and despise it, with all its baits and allurements, and employ all his powers, as well as his utmost industry, to obtain these immense and eternal blessings.

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Nor is there any thing in the way to these enjoyments that can deter you from it, unless holiness in heart and life appear to be a heavy and troublesome task to you: whereas, on the contrary, nothing surely can be named, that is either more suited to the dignity of human nature, more beautiful and becoming, or attended with greater pleasure. I therefore beseech and entreat you, by the bowels of divine mercy and by your own most precious souls, that you would seriously consider these things, and make them your principal study. Make an experiment, attended with no danger or expense. Make a trial of the ways of this wisdom, and I doubt not but you will be so charmed with the pleasantness thereof, that you will never thenceforward depart from them. For this purpose, I earnestly recommend to you, to be constant and assiduous in prayer; nay, it is St. Paul's exhortation, that you *pray without ceasing*. So that prayer may be, not only, according to the old saying, "the key that opens the day, and the lock that shuts up the night;" but also, so to speak, a staff for support in the daytime, and a bed for rest and comfort in the night; two conveniences which are commonly expressed by one single Hebrew word. And be assured, that the more frequently you pray, with so much the greater ease and pleasure will your prayers be attended, not only from the common and necessary connexion between acts and habits, but also from the nature of this duty; for prayer, being a kind of conversation with God, gradually purifies the soul, and makes it continually more and more like unto him. Our love to God is also very much improved by this frequent intercourse with him; and by his love, on the other hand, the soul is effectually disposed to fervency, as well as frequency in prayer, and can, by no means, subsist without it.

LECTURE II.

Of Happiness, its Name and Nature, and the Desire of it implanted in the human Heart.

How deep and dark is that abyss of misery, into which man is precipitated by his deplorable fall; since he has thereby lost, not only the possession, but also the know-

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ledge of his chief or principal good! He has no distinct notion of what it is, of the means of recovering it, or the way he is to take in pursuit of it. Yet the human mind, however stunned and weakened by so dreadful a fall, still retains some faint idea, some confused and obscure notions of the good it has lost, and some remaining seeds of its heavenly original. It has also still remaining a kind of languid sense of its misery and indigence, with affections suitable to those obscure notions. From this imperfect sense of its poverty and these feeble affections, arise some motions and efforts of the mind, like those of one groping in the dark, and seeking rest every where, but meeting with it no where. This, at least, is beyond all doubt, and indisputable, that all men wish well to themselves, nay, that they all catch at and desire to attain the enjoyment of the most absolute and perfect good: even the worst of men have not lost this regard for themselves, nor can they possibly divest themselves of it. And though, alas! it is but too true, that, as we are naturally blind, we run ourselves upon misery under the disguise of happiness, and not only embrace, according to the common saying, "a cloud instead of Juno," but death itself instead of life; yet, even from this most fatal error, it is evident that we naturally pursue either real happiness, or what, to our mistaken judgment, appears to be such. Nor can the mind of man divest itself of this propensity, without divesting itself of its being. This is what the schoolmen mean, when, in their manner of expression, they say, "that the will is carried towards happiness, not simply as will, but as nature."

It is true, indeed, the generality of mankind are not well acquainted with the motions of their own minds, nor take any pains to observe them, but, like brutes, by a kind of secret impulse, are violently carried towards such enjoyments as fall in their way. They do but very little, or not at all, enter into themselves, and review the state and operations of their own minds; yet, in all their actions, all their wishes and desires, though they are not always aware of it themselves, this thirst after immortality exerts and discovers itself. Consider the busy part of mankind, hurrying to and fro in the exercise of their several professions, physicians, lawyers, merchants, mechanics, farmers,

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and even soldiers themselves—they all toil and labour, in order to obtain rest, if success attend their endeavours and any fortunate event answer their expectations. Encouraged by these fond hopes, they eat their bread with the sweat of their brow. But their toil, after all, is endless, constantly returning in a circle; and the days of men pass away in suffering real evils, and entertaining fond hopes of apparent good, which they seldom or never attain. *Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain.* He pursues rest and ease, like his shadow, and never overtakes them; but, for the most part, ceases to live before he begins to live to purpose. However, after all, this confused and fluctuating appetite which determines us to the pursuit of good, either real or apparent, as it is congenial with us and deeply rooted in the human heart, so it is the great handle by which divine grace lays hold, as it were, upon our nature, draws us to itself, and extricates us out of the profound abyss of misery, into which we are fallen.

From this it evidently follows, that the design of sacred theology is the very same with that of human nature, and he that rejects it *wrongeth his own soul*, for so the wise king of Israel emphatically expresses it; he is the most irreconcilable enemy to his own happiness, and absolutely at variance with himself; according to that saying of St. Bernard, "After I was set in opposition to thee, I became also contrary to myself."

These considerations have determined me to begin these instructions, such as they are, which with divine assistance I intend to give you concerning the principles of the Christian religion, with a short disquisition concerning the chief or ultimate end of man. And here it is to be, first of all, observed, that the transcendent and supreme end of all, is, the glory of God; all things returning, in a most beautiful circle, to this, as the original source from which they at first took their rise. But the end of true religion, as far as it regards us, which is immediately connected with the former, and serves in a most glorious manner to promote it, is, the salvation and happiness of mankind.

Though I should not tell you what is to be understood by the term happiness or felicity in general, I cannot imagine any of you would be at a loss about it. Yet, I shall

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give a brief explication of it, that you may have the more distinct ideas of the thing itself, and the juster notions of what is to be further advanced on the subject. Nor is there, indeed, any controversy on this head; for all are agreed, that by the terms commonly used in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, to express happiness or felicity, we are to understand that perfect and complete good, which is suited and adapted to intelligent nature; I say, to *intelligent* nature, because the brute creatures cannot be said to be happy, but in a very improper sense. Happiness cannot be ascribed to horses or oxen, let them be ever so well fed and left in the full possession of liberty and ease. And as good in general is peculiar to intelligent beings, so, more especially, that perfect good, which constitutes felicity in its full and most extensive acceptation. It is true, indeed, in common conversation, men are very prodigal of this term, and, with extravagant levity, misapply it to every common enjoyment of life or apparent good they meet with, especially such as is most suited to their present exigencies; and thus, as Aristotle in his Ethics expresses it, "the sick person considers health, and the poor man riches, as the chief good." It is also true, that learned men, and even the sacred scriptures, give the name of felicity to some symptoms and small beginnings of future happiness. But, as we have already observed, this term, in its true and complete sense, comprehends in it that absolute and full perfection of good, which entirely excludes all uneasiness, and brings with it every thing that can contribute to satisfaction and delight. Consequently that good, whatever it be, which most perfectly supplies all the wants and satisfies all the cravings of our rational appetites, is objective felicity, as the schools express it; and actual or formal felicity is the full possession and enjoyment of that complete and chief good. It consists in a perfect tranquillity of the mind; not a dull and stupid indolence like the calm that reigns in the Dead Sea, but such a peace of mind as is lively, active, and constantly attended with the purest joy; not a mere absence of uneasiness and pain, but such a perfect ease as is constantly accompanied with the most perfect satisfaction and supreme delight; and if the term had not been degraded by the mean uses to which it has been prostituted, I should not scruple to call it pleasure. And, indeed, we may still

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call it by this name, provided we purify the term and guard it by the following limitations; so as to understand by felicity, such a pleasure as is perfect, constant, pure, spiritual, and divine: for never, since I ventured to think upon such subjects, could I be satisfied with the opinion of Aristotle and the schoolmen, who distinguish between the fruition of the chief good, which constitutes true felicity, and the delight and satisfaction attending that fruition; because, at this rate, that good would not be the ultimate end and completion of our desires, nor desired on its own account; for whatever good we wish to possess, the end of our wishing is, that we may enjoy it with tranquillity and delight; and this uninterrupted delight or satisfaction, which admits of no alloy, is love in possession of the beloved object and at the height of its ambition

LECTURE III.

Of the Happiness of Man, and that it is really to be found.

You will not, I imagine, be offended, nor think I intend to insult you, because I have once and again, with great earnestness and sincerity, wished you and myself a sound and serious temper of mind; for, if we may represent things as they really are, very few men are possessed of so valuable a blessing. The far greater part of them are intoxicated either with the pleasures or the cares of this world; they stagger about with a tottering and unstable pace; and, as Solomon expresses it, *The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them; because he knoweth not how to go to the city;* the heavenly city, and the vision of peace, which very few have a just notion of or are at pains to seek after. Nay, they know not what it is they are seeking. They flutter from one object to another, and live at hazard. They have no certain harbour in view, nor direct their course by any fixed star. But to him that knoweth not the port to which he is bound, no wind can be favourable; neither can he who has not yet determined at what mark he is to shoot, direct his arrow aright. That this may not be our case, but that we may have a proper object to aim at, I propose to speak of the chief end of our being.

And to begin at the Father of spirits or pure intelligences

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—God, blessed for ever, completely happy in himself from all eternity is his own happiness. His self-sufficiency, that eternal and infinite satisfaction and complacency he has in himself, is the peculiar and most complete felicity of that supreme Being who derives his existence from himself, and has given being to every thing else; which Chrysostom has well expressed by saying, that "it is God's peculiar property to stand in need of nothing." And Claudius Victor beautifully describes him as "vested with all the majesty of creative power, comprehending in his infinite mind all the creatures to be afterwards produced, having all the revolutions of time constantly present to his all-seeing eye, and being an immense and most glorious kingdom to himself."

Yet all we can say of this primary, uncreated Majesty and Felicity, is but mere talking to little or no sort of purpose; for here, not only words fail us, but even thought is at a stand and quite overpowered, when we survey the supreme, self-existent Being, perfectly happy and glorious in the sole enjoyment of his own infinite perfections throughout numberless ages, without angels, men, or any other creature: so that the poet had reason to say, "What eye so strong, that the matchless brightness of thy glory will not dazzle it, and make it close?"

Let us, therefore, descend into ourselves, but with a view to return to him again; and not only so, but in such a manner, that the end and design of our descending to inquire into our own situation, be, that we may, with greater advantage, return and reascend to God; for if we inquire into our own ultimate end, this disquisition must rise above all other beings, and at last terminate in him, because he himself is that very end, and out of him there is neither beginning nor end. The felicity of angels, which is an intermediate degree of happiness, we shall not insist on, not only because it is foreign to our purpose, but also because our felicity and theirs will be found upon the matter to be precisely the same.

With regard to our own happiness, we shall first show that such happiness really exists, and next inquire what it is and wherein it consists.

We assert then, that there is such a thing as human felicity. And this ought rather to be taken for granted as a

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matter unquestionable, than strictly proved. But when I speak of human felicity, I am well satisfied you will not imagine, I mean such a happiness as may be had from human things, but that I take the term subjectively, and understand by it the happiness of man. Now he who would deny, that this is not only among the number of possible things, but actually attained by some part, at least, of the human race, would not only render himself unworthy of such happiness, but even of human nature itself; because he would thereby do all in his power to deprive it of its highest expectations and its greatest honour: but whosoever allows that all things were produced by the hand of an infinitely wise Creator, cannot possibly doubt that man, the head and ornament of all his visible works, was made capable of a proper and suitable end. The principal beauty of the creation consists in this, that all things in it are disposed in the most excellent order, and every particular intended for some noble and suitable end; and if this could not be said of man, who is the glory of the visible world, what a great deformity must it be! how great a gap in nature! And this gap must be the greater, in that, as we have already observed, man is naturally endued with strong and vigorous desires towards such an end. Yet, on this absurd supposition, all such desires and expectations would be vain, and to no purpose; and so, something might be said in defence of that peevish and impatient expression which escaped the psalmist in a fit of excessive sorrow, and he might have an excuse for saying, *Why hast thou made all men in vain?* This would not only have been a frightful gap in nature, but, if I am allowed so to speak, at this rate the whole human race must have been created in misery, and exposed to unavoidable torments, from which they could never have been relieved, had they been formed, not only capable of a good quite unattainable and altogether without their reach, but also with strong and restless desires towards that impossible good. Now, as this is by no means to be admitted, there must necessarily be some full, permanent, and satisfying good, that may be attained by man, and in the possession of which he must be truly happy.

When we revolve these things in our minds, do we not feel within a powerful impulse, exciting us to set aside all

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other cares, that we may discover the one chief good, and attain to the enjoyment of it? While we inhabit these bodies, I own, we lie under a necessity of using corporeal and fading things; but there is no necessity that we should be slaves to our bellies and the lusts of the flesh, or have our affections glued to this earth; nay, that it should be so, is the highest and most intolerable indignity. Can it be thought that man was born merely to cram himself with victuals and drink, or gratify the other appetites of a body which he has in common with the brutes?—to snuff up the wind, to entertain delusive and vain hopes all the days of his life, and, when that short scene of madness is over, to be laid in the grave, and reduced to his original dust? Far be it from us to draw such conclusions. There is certainly something beyond this, something so great and lasting, that, in respect of it, the short point of time we live here, with all its bustle of business and pleasures, is more empty and vanishing than smoke. "I am more considerable," says one, "and born to greater matters, than to become the slave of my diminutive body." With how much greater truth might we speak thus, were we regenerated from heaven! Let us be ashamed to live with our heads bowed down, like groveling beasts gazing upon the earth, or even to catch at the vain and airy shadows of science, while, in the mean time, we know not, or do not consider, whence we took our rise and whither we are soon to return; what place is to receive our souls, when they are set at liberty from these bodily prisons. If it is the principal desire of your souls to understand the nature of this felicity, and the way that leads to it, *search the scriptures*, for from them alone, we all think, or profess to think, we can have eternal life. I exhort and beseech you, never to suffer so much as one day to pass, either through lazy negligence or too much eagerness in inferior studies, without reading some part of the sacred records with a pious and attentive disposition of mind; still joining with your reading fervent prayer, that you may thereby draw down that divine light, without which spiritual things cannot be read and understood. But with this light shining upon them, it is not possible to express how much sweeter you will find these inspired writings, than Cicero, Demosthenes, Homer, Aristotle, and all the

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other orators, poets, and philosophers. They reason about an imaginary felicity, and every one in his own way advances some precarious and uncertain thoughts upon it; but this Book alone shows clearly, and with absolute certainty, what it is, and points out the way that leads to the attainment of it. This is that which prevailed with St. Augustine to study the scriptures, and engaged his affection to them. "In Cicero, and Plato, and other such writers," says he, "I meet with many things wittily said, and things that have a moderate tendency to move the passions; but in none of them do I find these words, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"

LECTURE IV.

Of human Felicity, and that it cannot be found either in the Earth or earthly Things.

We are all in quest of one thing, but almost all of us out of the right road; therefore, to be sure, the longer and the more swiftly we move in a wrong path, the further we depart from the object of our desires: and if it is so, we can speak or think of nothing more proper and seasonable, than of inquiring about the only right way, whereby we may all come to see the bright Fountain of goodness. I know you will remember, that on the last occasion we proposed the most important of all questions, namely, that concerning our ultimate end, or the way to discover true happiness; to which, we asserted, all mankind do aspire with a natural, and therefore a constant and uniform ardour; or rather we supposed, that all are sufficiently acquainted with this happiness, nay, really do, or at least may feel it within them, if they thoroughly know themselves: for this is the end of the labours of men; to this tend all their toils. This is the general aim of all, not only of the sharp-sighted, but the blear-eyed and short-sighted; nay, even of those that are quite blind, who, though they cannot see the mark they propose to themselves, yet are in hopes of reaching it at last: that is to say, though their ideas of it are very confused and imperfect, they all desire happiness in the obvious sense of the

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word. We have also observed, that this term, in its general acceptation, imports that full and perfect good which is suited to intelligent nature. It is not to be doubted but the felicity of the Deity, as well as his being, is in himself and from himself; but our inquiry is concerning our own happiness. We also positively determined, that there is some blessed end suited and adapted to our nature, and that this can by no means be denied; for, since all parts of the universe have proper ends suited and adapted to their natures, that the most noble and excellent creature of the whole sublunary world should in this be defective, and therefore created in vain, would be so great a solecism, such a deformity in the whole fabric, and so unworthy of the supreme and all-wise Creator, that it can by no means be admitted, nor even so much as imagined. This point being settled, namely, that there is some determinate good, in the possession whereof the mind of man may be fully satisfied and in perfect rest, we now proceed to inquire what this good is, and where it may be found.

The first thing, and at the same time a very considerable step towards this discovery, will be, to show where and in what things this perfect good is not to be found; not only because this point being settled, it will be easier to determine wherein it actually consists—nay, the latter will naturally flow from the former—but also because, as has been observed, we shall find the far greater part of mankind pursuing vain shadows and phantoms of happiness, and, throughout their whole lives, wandering in a great variety of by-paths, seeking the way to make a proper improvement of life, almost always hunting for that chief good where it is not to be found. They must first be recalled from this rambling and fruitless course, before they can possibly be directed into the right road. I shall not spin out this negative proposition by dividing the subject of it into several branches, and insisting separately upon every one of them, but consider all these errors and mistakes, both vulgar and practical, speculative and philosophical, however numerous they may be, as comprehended under one general head, and fully obviate them all by one single proposition, which, with divine assistance, I shall explain to you in this lecture, and that very briefly.

The proposition is, that human felicity, or that full and

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complete good that is suited to the nature of man, is not to be found in the earth nor in earthly things.

Now what if, instead of further proof or illustration, I should only say—If this perfect felicity is to be found within this visible world or the verge of this earthly life, let him, I pray, who hath found it out, stand forth; let him tell who can, what star of whatever magnitude, what constellation or combination of stars, has so favourable an aspect and so benign an influence, or what is that singular good or assemblage of good things in this earth, that can confer upon mankind a happy life? All things that, like bright stars, have hitherto attracted the eyes of men, vanishing in a few days, have proved themselves to be comets, not only of no benign, but even of pernicious influence; according to the saying, "There is no comet but what brings some mischief along with it." All that have ever lived during so many ages that the world has hitherto lasted, noble and ignoble, learned and unlearned, fools and wise men, have gone in search of happiness—has ever any one of them all, in times past, or is there any one at this day that has said Ευρηκα, I have found it? Different men have given different definitions and descriptions of it, and, according to their various turns of mind, have painted it in a great variety of shapes; but, since the creation of the world, there has not been so much as one who ever pretended to say, "Here it is; I have it, and have attained the full possession of it." Even those from whom most was to be expected, men of the utmost penetration, and most properly qualified for such researches, after all their labour and industry, have acknowledged their disappointment, and that they had not found it. But it would be wonderful indeed, that there should be any good suited to human nature, and to which mankind were born, and yet that it never fell to the share of any one individual of the sons of men; unless it be said, that the things of life, in this respect, resemble the speculations of the schools, and that, as they talk about objects of knowledge that were never known, so there is some good attainable by men, which was never actually attained.

But to look a little more narrowly into this matter, and take a transient view of the several periods of life—infants are so far from attaining to happiness, that they have not

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yet arrived at human life; yet if they are compared with those of riper years, they are, in a low and improper sense, with regard to two things, innocence and ignorance, happier than men; for there is nothing that years add to infancy so invariably, and in so great abundance, as guilt and pollution; and the experience and knowledge of the world which they give us, do not so much improve the head, as they vex and distress the heart. So that the great man represented in the tragedy embracing his infant, who knew nothing of his own misery, seems to have had some reason to say, that "those who know nothing enjoy the happiest life." And, to be sure, what we gain by our progress from infancy to youth is, that we thereby become more exposed to the miseries of life, and, as we improve in the knowledge of things, our pains and torments are also increased; for either children are put to servile employments or mechanic arts, or, if they happen to have a more genteel and liberal education, this very thing turns to a punishment, as they are thereby subjected to rods, chastisements, and the power of parents and instructors, which is often a kind of petty tyranny; and, when the yoke is lightened with the greatest prudence, it still seems hard to be borne, as it is above the capacity of their young minds, thwarts their wishes and inclinations, and encroaches upon their beloved liberty.

Youth, put in full possession of this liberty, for the most part ceases to be master of itself; nor can it be so truly said to be delivered from its former misery, as to exchange it for a worse, even that very liberty. It leaves the harbour to sail through quicksands and sirens; and when both these are passed, launches out into the deep sea. Alas! to what various fates is it there exposed! How many contrary winds does it meet with! How many storms threatening it with shipwreck! How many shocks has it to bear from avarice, ambition, and envy, either in consequence of the violent stirrings of these passions within itself, or the fierce attacks of them from without! And amidst all these tempests, the ship is either early overwhelmed, or broken by storms, and, worn out by old age, at last falls to pieces.

Nor does it much signify what state of life one enters into, or what rank he holds in human society; for all

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though wisdom and virtue, or piety, were perfect, so long as we have bodies, we must at the same time have all bodily advantages, in order to perfect felicity. Therefore the satirist smartly ridicules the wise man of the stoics; "He is," says he, "free, honoured, beautiful, a king of kings, and particularly happy, except when he is troubled with phlegm."

Since these things are so, we must raise our minds higher, and not live with our heads bowed down like the common sort of mankind; who, as St. Augustine expresses it, "look for a happy life in the region of death." To set our hearts upon the perishing goods of this wretched life and its muddy pleasures, is not the happiness of men, but of hogs. And if pleasure is dirt, other things are but smoke. Were this the only good proposed to the desires and hopes of men, it would not have been so great a privilege to be born. Be therefore advised, and beware of this poisonous cup, lest your minds thereby become brutish, and fall into a fatal oblivion of your origin and your end. Turn that part of your composition which is divine to God its Creator and Father, without whom we can neither be happy, nor indeed be at all.

LECTURE V.

Of the Immortality of the Soul.

THERE are many things that keep mankind employed, particularly business, or rather trifles, for so the affairs which are in this world considered as most important ought to be called, when compared with that of minding our own valuable concerns, knowing ourselves, and truly consulting our highest interests; but how few are there that make this their study! The definition you commonly give of man is, that he is a rational creature; though, to be sure, it is not applicable to the generality of mankind, unless you understand, that they are such, not actually, but in power only, and that very remote. They are, for the most part at least, more silly and foolish than children, and like them fond of toys and rattles. They fatigue themselves running about and sauntering from place to place, but do nothing to purpose.

What a wonder it is, that souls of a heavenly original

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have so far forgotten their native country, and are so immersed in dirt and mud, that there are few men who frequently converse with themselves about their own state, thinking gravely of their original and their end, seriously laying to heart, that, as the poet expresses it, "good and evil are set before mankind;" and who, after mature consideration, not only think it the most wise and reasonable course, but are also fully resolved to exert themselves to the utmost, in order to arrive at a sovereign contempt of earthly things, and aspire to those enjoyments that are divine and eternal. For our parts, I am fully persuaded we shall be of this mind, if we seriously reflect upon what has been said; for if there is, of necessity, a complete, permanent, and satisfying good intended for man, and no such good is to be found in the earth or earthly things, we must proceed further, and look for it somewhere else; and, in consequence of this, conclude, that man is not quite extinguished by death, but removes to another place, and that the human soul is by all means immortal.

Many men have added a great variety of different arguments to support this conclusion, some of them strong and solid, and others, to speak freely, too metaphysical and of little strength, especially as they are as obscure, as easily denied, and as hard to be proved, as that very conclusion, in support of which they are adduced.

They who reason from the immaterial nature of the soul, and from its being infused into the body, as also from its method of operation which is confined to none of the bodily organs, may easily prevail with those who believe these principles to admit the truth of the conclusion they want to draw from them; but if they meet with any who obstinately deny the premises, or even doubt the truth of them, it will be a matter of difficulty to support such hypotheses with clear and conclusive arguments. If the soul of man was well acquainted with itself and fully understood its own nature, if it could investigate the nature of its union with the body and the method of its operation therein, we doubt not but from thence it might draw these and other such arguments of its immortality; but since, shut up in the prison of a dark body, it is so little known and so incomprehensible to itself, and since, in so great obscurity, it can scarcely, if at all, discover

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the least of its own features and complexion, it would be a very difficult matter for it to say much concerning its internal nature, or nicely determine the methods of its operation. But it would be surprising if any one should deny, that the very operations it performs, especially those of the more noble and exalted sort, are strong marks and conspicuous characters of its excellence and immortality.

Nothing is more evident than that, besides life and sense and animal spirits which he has in common with the brutes, there is in man something more exalted, more pure, and that more nearly approaches to divinity. God has given to the former a sensitive soul, but to us a mind also; and, to speak distinctly, that spirit which is peculiar to man, and whereby he is raised above all other animals, ought to be called mind rather than soul. Be this as it may, it is hardly possible to say, how vastly the human mind excels the other with regard to its wonderful powers, and, next to them, with respect to its works, devices, and inventions; for it performs such great and wonderful things, that the brutes, even those of the greatest sagacity, can neither imitate, nor at all understand, much less invent. Nay, man, though he is much less in bulk and inferior in strength to the greatest part of them, yet, as lord and king of them all, he can, by surprising means, bend and apply the strength and industry of all the other creatures, the virtues of all herbs and plants, and, in a word, all the parts and powers of this visible world, to the convenience and accommodation of his own life. He also builds cities, erects commonwealths, makes laws, conducts armies, fits out fleets, measures not only the earth but the heavens also, and investigates the motions of the stars. He foretells eclipses many years before they happen; and, with very little difficulty, sends his thoughts to a great distance, bids them visit the remotest cities and countries, mount above the sun and the stars, and even the heavens themselves.

But all these things are inconsiderable and contribute but little to our present purpose, in respect of that one incomparable dignity that results to the human mind from its being capable of religion, and having indelible characters thereof naturally stamped upon it. It acknowledges a God and worships him; it builds temples to his honour;

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it celebrates his never enough exalted majesty with sacrifices, prayers, and praises; depends upon his bounty; implores his aid; and so carries on a constant correspondence with heaven: and, which is a very strong proof of its being originally from heaven, it hopes at last to return to it. And, truly, in my judgment, this previous impression and hope of immortality, and these earnest desires after it, are a very strong evidence of that immortality. These impressions, though in most men they lie overpowered and almost extinguished by the weight of their bodies and an extravagant love to present enjoyments, yet now and then, in time of adversity, break forth and exert themselves, especially under the pressure of severe distempers and at the approach of death. But those whose minds are purified and their thoughts habituated to divine things, with what constant and ardent wishes do they breathe after that blessed immortality! How often do their souls complain within them, that they have dwelt so long in these earthly tabernacles! Like exiles, they earnestly wish, make interest, and struggle hard to regain their native country. Moreover, does not that noble neglect of the body and its senses, and that contempt of all the pleasures of the flesh, which these heavenly souls have attained, evidently show, that in a short time they will be taken from hence, and that the body and soul are of a very different and almost contrary nature to one another; that, therefore, the duration of the one depends not upon the other, but is quite of another kind; and that the soul, set at liberty from the body, is not only exempted from death, but, in some sense, then begins to live, and then first sees the light? Had we not this hope to support us, what ground should we have to lament our first nativity, which placed us in a life so short, so destitute of good, and so crowded with miseries—a life which we pass entirely in grasping phantoms of felicity and suffering real calamities! So that if there were not beyond this a life and a happiness that more truly deserve these names, who can help seeing, that, of all creatures man would be the most miserable, and of all men the best would be the most unhappy? For although every wise man looks upon the belief of the immortality of the soul as one of the great and principal supports of religion, there may possible be

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some rare, exalted, and truly divine minds, who would choose the pure and noble path of virtue for its own sake, would constantly walk in it, and, out of love to it, would not decline the severest hardships, if they should happen to be exposed to them on its account; yet, it cannot be denied, that the common sort of Christians, though they are really and at heart sound believers and true Christians, fall very far short of this attainment, and would scarcely, if at all, embrace virtue and religion, if you take away the rewards; which, I think, the apostle Paul hints at in this expression, *If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable.* The apostle indeed does not intend these words as a direct proof of the immortality of the soul in a separate state, but as an argument to prove the resurrection of the body; which is a doctrine near akin and closely connected with the former; for that great restoration is added as an instance of the superabundance and immensity of the divine goodness, whose pleasure it is, that not only the better and more divine part of man, which upon its return to its original source is, without the body, capable of enjoying a perfectly happy and eternal life, should have a glorious immortality, but also that this earthly tabernacle, as being the faithful attendant and constant companion of the soul through all its toils and labours in this world, be also admitted to a share and participation of its heavenly and eternal felicity; that so, according to our Lord's expression, every faithful soul may have returned into its bosom *good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.*

Let our belief of this immortality be founded entirely on divine revelation, and then, like a city fortified with a rampart of earth drawn round it, let it be outwardly guarded and defended by reason; which, in this case, suggests arguments as strong and convincing as the subject will admit of. If any one, in the present case, promises demonstration, his undertaking is certainly too much; if he desires or expects it from another, he requires too much. There are indeed very few demonstrations in philosophy, if you except mathematical sciences, that can be truly and strictly so called, and, if we inquire narrowly into the matter, perhaps we shall find none at all; nay, if even the mathematical demonstrations are examined by

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the strict rules and ideas of Aristotle, the greatest part of them will be found imperfect and defective. The saying of that philosopher is therefore wise and applicable to many cases; "Demonstrations are not to be expected in all cases, but so far as the subject will admit of them." But, if we were well acquainted with the nature and essence of the soul, or even its precise method of operation on the body, it is highly probable we could draw from thence evident and undeniable demonstrations of that immortality which we are now asserting; whereas, so long as the mind of man is so little acquainted with its own nature, we must not expect any such.

But that unquenchable thirst of the soul, which we have already mentioned, is a strong proof of its divine nature—a thirst not to be allayed with the impure and turbid waters of any earthly good, or of all worldly enjoyments taken together. It thirsts after the never-failing Fountain of good, according to that saying of the psalmist, *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks.* It thirsts after a good, invisible, immaterial, and immortal; to the enjoyment whereof the ministry of a body is so far from being absolutely necessary, that it feels itself shut up and confined by that to which it is now united, as by a partition-wall, and groans under the pressure of it. And those souls that are quite insensible of this thirst, are certainly buried in the body, as in the carcass of an impure hog; nor have they so entirely divested themselves of this appetite we have mentioned, nor can they possibly so divest themselves of it, as not to feel it severely to their great misery sooner or later, either when they awake out of their lethargy within the body, or when they are obliged to leave it. To conclude—nobody, I believe, will deny, that we are to form our judgment of the true nature of the human mind, not from the sloth and stupidity of the most degenerate and vilest of men, but from the sentiments and fervent desires of the best and wisest of the species.

These sentiments concerning the immortality of the soul in its future existence not only include no impossibility or absurdity in them, but are also every way agreeable to sound reason, wisdom, and virtue, to the divine economy, and the natural wishes and desires of men. Wherefore most nations have with the greatest reason universally

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adopted them, and the wisest in all countries and in all ages have cheerfully embraced them; and though they could not confirm them with any argument of irresistible force, yet they felt something within them that corresponded with this doctrine, and always looked upon it as most beautiful and worthy of credit. "Nobody," says Atticus in Cicero, "shall drive me from the immortality of the soul." And Seneca's words are, "I took pleasure to inquire into the eternity of the soul, and even indeed to believe it. I resigned myself to so glorious a hope; for now I begin to despise the remains of a broken constitution, as being to remove into that immensity of time and into the possession of endless ages." O how much does the soul gain by this removal!

As for you, I doubt not but you will embrace this doctrine, not only as agreeable to reason, but as it is an article of the Christian faith. I only put you in mind to revolve it often within yourselves, and with a serious disposition of mind; for you will find it the strongest incitement to wisdom, good morals, and true piety. Nor can you imagine any thing that will more effectually divert you from a foolish admiration of present and perishing things, and from the allurements and sordid pleasures of this earthly body. Consider, I pray you, how unbecoming it is to make a heaven-born soul, that is to live for ever, a slave to the meanest, vilest, and most trifling things; and, as it were to thrust down to the kitchen a prince that is obliged to leave his country only for a short time. St. Bernard pathetically addresses himself to the body in favour of the soul, persuading it to treat the latter honourably, not only on account of its dignity, but also for the advantage that will thereby redound to the body itself: "Thou hast a noble guest, O flesh! a most noble one indeed, and all thy safety depends upon its salvation: it will certainly remember thee for good, if thou serve it well; and when it comes to its Lord, it will put him in mind of thee, and the mighty God himself will come to make thee, who art now a vile body, like unto his glorious one; and, O wretched flesh, he who came in humility and obscurity to redeem souls, will come in great majesty to glorify thee, and every eye shall see him." Be mindful, therefore, of your better part, and accustom it to think of

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its own eternity, always and every where having its eyes fixed upon that world to which it is most nearly related. And thus it will look down, as from on high, on all those things which the world considers as lofty and exalted, and will see them under its feet; and of all the things which are confined within the narrow verge of this present life, it will have nothing to desire and nothing to fear.

LECTURE VI.

Of the Happiness of the Life to come.

Of all the thoughts of men, there is certainly none that more often occurs to a serious mind that has its own interest at heart, than that to which all others are subordinate and subservient with regard to the intention—the ultimate and most desirable end of all our toils and cares, and even of life itself. And this important thought will the more closely beset the mind, the more sharp-sighted it is in prying into the real torments, the delusive hopes, and the false joys of this our wretched state: which is indeed so miserable, that it can never be sufficiently lamented; and as for laughter amidst so many sorrows, dangers, and fears, it must be considered as downright madness. Such was the opinion of the wisest of kings: *I have said of laughter*, says he, *It is mad, and of mirth, What doth it?* We have, therefore no cause to be much surprised at the bitter complaints which a grievous weight of afflictions has extorted even from great and good men; nay, it is rather a wonder, if the same causes do not often oblige us to repeat them.

If we look about us, how often are we shocked to observe either the calamities of our country, or the sad disasters of our relations and friends, for whom we have daily occasion to mourn, either as groaning under the pressure of poverty, pining away under languishing diseases, tortured by acute ones, or carried off by death, while we ourselves are in like manner very soon to draw tears from the eyes of others! Nay, how often are we a burden to ourselves, and groan heavily under afflictions of our own, that press hard upon our estates, our bodies, or our minds! Even those who seem to meet with the fewest and the least in-

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conveniencies in this life, and dazzle the eyes of spectators with the brightness of a seemingly constant and uniform felicity, besides that they often suffer from secret vexations and cares, which destroy their inward peace and prey upon their distressed hearts, how uncertain, weak, and brittle is that false happiness which appears about them, and when it shines brightest, how easily is it broken to pieces! So that it has been justly said, "They want another felicity to secure that which they are already possessed of." If, after all, there are some whose minds are hardened against all the forms and appearances of external things, and who look down with equal contempt upon all the events of this world, whether of a dreadful or an engaging aspect, even this disposition of mind does not make them happy, nor do they think themselves so. They have still something to make them uneasy, the obscure darkness that overspreads their minds, their ignorance of heavenly things, and the strength of their carnal affections not yet entirely subdued. And though these we are now speaking of are by far the noblest and most beautiful part of the human race, yet if they had not within them that blessed hope of removing hence in a little time to the regions of light, the more severely they feel the straits and afflictions to which their souls are exposed by being shut up in this narrow earthly cottage, so much they certainly would be more miserable than the rest of mankind.

As oft therefore as we reflect upon these things, we shall find that the whole comes to this one conclusion—"There is certainly some end." There is, to be sure, some end suited to the nature of man, and worthy of it; some particular, complete, and permanent good; and since we in vain look for it within the narrow verge of this life, and among the many miseries that swarm on it from beginning to end, we must of necessity conclude, that there is certainly some more fruitful country and a more lasting life, to which our felicity is reserved, and into which we shall be received when we remove hence. This is not our rest, nor have we any place of residence here: it is the region of fleas and gnats; and while we search for happiness among these mean and perishing things, we are not only sure to be disappointed, but also sure not to escape those miseries which, in great numbers, continually

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beset us; so that we may apply to ourselves the saying of the famous artist confined in the island of Crete, and truly say, "The earth and the sea are shut up against us, and neither of them can favour our escape. The way to heaven is alone open, and this way we will strive to go.

Thus far we have advanced by degrees, and very lately we have discoursed upon the immortality of the soul, to which we have added the resurrection of our earthly body by way of appendix. It remains that we now inquire into the happiness of the life to come.

Yet, I own, I am almost deterred from entering upon this inquiry by the vast obscurity and sublimity of the subject, which in its nature is such, that we can neither understand it, nor, if we could, can it be expressed in words. The divine apostle, who had some glimpse of this felicity, describes it no otherwise than by his silence, calling the words he heard, *unspeakable, and such as it was not lawful for a man to utter*. And if he neither could nor would express what he saw, far be it from us boldly to force ourselves into or intrude upon what we have not seen; especially as the same apostle, in another place, acquaints us for our future caution, that this was unwarrantably done by some rash and forward persons in his own time. But since in the sacred archives of this new world, however invisible and unknown to us, we have some maps and descriptions of it suited to our capacity, we are not only allowed to look at them, but, as they were drawn for that very purpose, it would certainly be the greatest ingratitude, as well as the highest negligence in us, not to make some improvement of them. Here however we must remember what a great difference there is between the description of a kingdom in a small and imperfect map, and the extent and beauty of that very kingdom when viewed by the traveller's eye; and how much greater the difference must be between the felicity of that heavenly kingdom to which we are aspiring, and all, even the most striking figurative expressions, taken from the things of this earth, that are used to convey some faint and imperfect notion of it to our minds. What are these things, the false glare and shadows whereof in this earth are pursued with such keen and furious impetuosity —riches, honours, pleasures? All these, in their justest,

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purest, and sublimest sense, are comprehended in this blessed life. It is *a treasure*, that can neither fail nor be carried away by force or fraud, It is *an inheritance* incorruptible and undefiled; *a crown* that fadeth not away; a never-failing stream of joy and delight. It is a marriage feast, and of all others the most joyous and most sumptuous; one that always satisfies, and never cloys, the appetite. It is an eternal spring, and an everlasting light, a day without an evening. It is a paradise, where the lilies are always white and full blown, the saffron blooming, the trees sweat out their balsams, and the tree of life in the midst thereof. It is a city, where the houses are built of living pearls, the gates of precious stones, and the streets paved with the purest gold. Yet all these are nothing but veils of the happiness to be revealed on that most blessed day; nay, the light itself, which we have mentioned among the rest, though it be the most beautiful ornament in this visible world, is at best but a shadow of that heavenly glory: and how small soever that portion of this inaccessible brightness may be, which in the sacred scriptures shines upon us through these veils, it certainly very well deserves that we should often turn our eyes towards it, and view it with the closest attention.

1. Now the first thing that necessarily occurs in the constitution of happiness, is a full and complete deliverance from every evil and every grievance; which we may as certainly expect to meet with in that heavenly life, as it is impossible to be attained while we sojourn here below. All tears shall be wiped away from our eyes, and every cause and occasion of tears for ever removed from our sight. There are no tumults there, no wars, no poverty, no death nor disease. There, there is neither mourning, nor fear, nor sin which is the source and fountain of all other evils. There is neither violence within doors nor without, nor any complaint in the streets of that blessed city. There no friend goes out nor enemy comes in.

2. Full vigour of body and mind, health, beauty, purity, and perfect tranquillity.

3. The most delightful society of angels, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and all the saints; among whom there are no reproaches, contentions, controversies, nor party-spirit, because there are there none of the sources whence

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they can spring, nor any thing to encourage their growth; for there is there particularly no ignorance, no blind self-love, no vainglory nor envy, which is quite excluded from those divine regions; but, on the contrary, perfect charity, whereby every one, together with his own felicity, enjoys that of his neighbours, and is happy in the one as well as the other: hence there is among them a kind of infinite reflection and multiplication of happiness, like that of a spacious hall adorned with gold and precious stones, dignified with a full assembly of kings and potentates, and having its walls quite covered with the brightest looking-glasses.

4. But what infinitely exceeds and quite eclipses all the rest, is that boundless ocean of happiness, which results from the beatific vision of the ever blessed God; without which neither the tranquillity they enjoy, nor the society of saints, nor the possession of any particular finite good, nor indeed of all such taken together, can satisfy the soul or make it completely happy. The manner of this enjoyment we can only expect to understand, when we enter upon the full possession of it; till then, to dispute and raise many questions about it is nothing but vain, foolish talking, and fighting with phantoms of our own brain. But the schoolmen, who confine the whole of this felicity to bare speculation, or as they call it, an *intellectual act*, are in this, as in many other cases, guilty of great presumption, and their conclusion is built upon a very weak foundation; for although contemplation be the highest and noblest act of the mind, yet complete happiness necessarily requires some present good suited to the whole man, the whole soul, and all its faculties. Nor is it any objection to this doctrine, that the whole of this felicity is commonly comprehended in scripture under the term of *vision*; for the mental vision, or contemplation of the primary and infinite good, most properly signifies, or at least includes in it, the full enjoyment of that good; and the observation of the Rabbins concerning scripture phrases, that, "words expressing the senses include also the affections naturally arising from those sensations," is very well known. Thus, knowing is often put for approving and loving, and seeing for enjoying and attaining. *Taste and see that God is good*, says the psalmist. And, in fact, it is no small pleasure to,

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lovers to dwell together, and mutually to enjoy the sight of one another. "Nothing is more agreeable to lovers, than to live together."

We must therefore, by all means, conclude, that this beatific vision includes in it not only a distinct and intuitive knowledge of God, but, so to speak, such a knowledge as gives us the enjoyment of that most perfect Being, and, in some sense, unites us to him; for such a vision it must of necessity be, that converts that love of the infinite Good which blazes in the souls of the saints into full possession, that crowns all their wishes and fills them with an abundant and overflowing fulness of joy, that vents itself in everlasting blessings and songs of praise.

And this is the only doctrine, if you believe it, and I make no doubt but you do—this, I say, is the only doctrine that will transport your whole souls, and raise them up on high. Hence you will learn to trample under feet all the turbid and muddy pleasures of the flesh, and all the allurements and splendid trifles of the present world. However those earthly enjoyments, that are swelled up by false names and the strength of imagination to a vast size, may appear grand and beautiful, and still greater and more engaging to those that are unacquainted with them, how small, how inconsiderable do they all appear to a soul that looks for a heavenly country, that expects to share the joys of angels, and has its thoughts constantly employed about these objects! To conclude—the more the soul withdraws, so to speak, from the body and retires within itself, the more it rises above itself; and the more closely it cleaves to God, the more the life it lives in this earth resembles that which it will enjoy in heaven, and the larger foretastes it has of the first-fruits of that blessed harvest. Aspire, therefore, to holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord.*

LECTURE VII.

Of the Being of God.

THOUGH on most subjects the opinions of men are various and often quite opposite, insomuch that they seem to be more remarkable for the vast variety of their sentiments,

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than that of their faces and languages; there are, however, two things, wherein all nations are agreed, and in which there seems to be a perfect harmony throughout the whole human race—the desire of happiness and a sense of religion. The former no man desires to shake off; and though some possibly would willingly part with the latter, it is not in their power to eradicate it entirely: they cannot banish God altogether out of their thoughts, nor extinguish every spark of religion within them. It is certainly true, that, for the most part, this desire of happiness wanders in darkness from one object to another without fixing upon any, and the sense of religion is either suffered to lie inactive or deviates into superstition; yet the great Creator of the world employs these two, as the materials of a fallen building, to repair the ruins of the human race, and as handles whereby he draws his earthen vessel out of the deep gulf of misery into which it is fallen.

Of the former of these, that is, felicity, we have already spoken on another occasion: we shall therefore now, with divine assistance, employ some part of our time in considering that sense of religion which is naturally impressed upon the mind of man.

Nor will our labour, I imagine, be unprofitably employed in collecting together those few general principles, in which so many and so very dissimilar forms of religion, and sentiments extremely different, harmoniously agree; for as every science most properly begins with universal propositions and things more generally known, so, in the present case, besides the other advantages, it will be no small support to a weak and wavering mind, that amidst all the disputes and contentions subsisting between the various sects and parties in religion, the great and necessary articles, at least, of our faith, are established in some particulars, by the general consent of mankind, and in all the rest, by that of the whole Christian world.

I would therefore most earnestly wish, that your minds, rooted and established in the faith, were firmly united in this delightful bond of religion, which, like a golden chain, will be no burden, but an ornament; not a yoke of slavery, but a badge of true and generous liberty. I would by no means have you to be Christians upon the authority of mere tradition or education, and the example and precepts

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of parents and masters, but purely from a full conviction of your own understandings, and a fervent disposition of the will and affections proceeding therefrom. For piety "is the sole and only good among mankind," and you can expect none of the fruits of religion, unless the root of it be well laid, and firmly established by faith; for, "all the virtues are the daughters of faith," says Clemens Alexandrinus.

Lucretius, with very ill-advised praises, extols his favourite Grecian philosopher as one fallen down from heaven to be the deliverer of mankind, and to dispel their distressing terrors and fears, because he fancied he had found out an effectual method to banish all religion entirely out of the minds of men. And, to say the truth, in no age has there been wanting brutish souls, too much enslaved to their corporeal senses, who would wish these opinions to be true; yet after all, there are very few of them who are able to persuade themselves of the truth of those vicious principles which, with great impudence and importunity, they commonly inculcate upon others. They belch out with full mouth their foolish dreams, often in direct opposition to conscience and knowledge; and what they unhappily would wish to be true, they can scarcely, if at all, believe themselves. You are acquainted with Horace's recantation, wherein he tells us, that he had been long bigoted to the mad tenets of the Epicurean philosophy, but found himself at last obliged to alter his sentiments, and deny all he had asserted before.

Some souls lose the whole exercise of their reason, because they inform bodies which labour under the defect of temperament or of proper organs; yet you continue to give the old definition of man, and call him a rational creature; and should any one think proper to call him a religious creature, he would, to be sure, have as much reason on his side, and need not fear his opinion would be rejected, because of a few madmen who laugh at religion. Nor is it improbable, as some of the ancients have asserted, that those few among the Greeks who were called atheists, had not that epithet because they absolutely denied the being of God, but only because they rejected and justly laughed at the fictitious and ridiculous deities of the nations.

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Of all the institutions and customs received among men, we meet with nothing more solemn and general than that of religion, and sacred rites performed to the honour of some deity; which is a very strong argument, that that persuasion, in preference to any other, is written, nay, rather engraven, in strong and indelible characters upon the mind of man. This is, as it were, the name of the great Creator stamped upon the noblest of all his visible works, that thus man may acknowledge himself to be his, and concluding from the inscription he finds impressed upon his mind, that what belongs to God ought in strict justice to be restored to him, be wholly reunited to his first principle, that immense ocean of goodness, whence he took his rise. The distemper that has invaded mankind is indeed grievous and epidemical: it consists in a mean and degenerate love to the body and corporeal things, and, in consequence of this, a stupid and brutish forgetfulness of God, though he can never be entirely blotted out of the mind. This forgetfulness, a few, and but very few, alarmed and awakened by the divine rod, early shake off. And even in the most stupid, and such as are buried in the deepest sleep, the original impression sometimes discovers itself when they are under the pressure of some grievous calamity, or on the approach of danger, and especially upon a near prospect of death. Then the thoughts of God, that had lain hid and been long suppressed, forced out by the weight of pain and the impressions of fear, come to be remembered; and the whole soul being, as it were, roused out of its long and deep sleep, men begin to look about them, inquire what the matter is, and seriously reflect whence they came and whither they are going. Then the truth comes naturally from their hearts. The stormy sea alarmed even profane sailors so much, that they awoke the sleeping prophet; *Arise*, say they, *thou sleeper, and call upon thy God.*

But however weak or imperfect this original or innate knowledge of God may be, it discovers itself every where, so far, at least, that you can meet with no man or society of men, that, by some form of worship or ceremonies, do not acknowledge a Deity, and, according to their capacity and the custom of their country, pay him homage. It is true, some late travellers have reported that in that

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part of the new world called Brazil there are some tribes of the natives, among whom you can discover no symptoms that they have the least sense of a Deity; but, besides that the truth of this report is very far from being well ascertained, and that the observation might have been too precipitately made by new comers who had not made sufficient inquiry; even supposing it to be true, it is not of such consequence, when opposed to all the rest of the world, and the universal agreement of all nations and ages upon this subject, that the least regard should be paid to it; nor must we imagine that it at all lessens the weight of this great argument, which has been generally and most justly urged, both by ancients and moderns, to establish the first and common foundation of religion.

Now whoever accurately considers this universal sense of religion, of which we have been speaking, will find that it comprehends in it these particulars; 1, that there is a God; 2, that he is to be worshiped; 3, which is a consequence of the former, that he regards the affairs of men; 4, that he has given them a law, enforced by rewards and punishments; and that the distribution of these is, in a very great measure, reserved to a life different from that we live in this earth, is the firm belief, if not of all, at least, of the generality of mankind. And though our present purpose does not require that we should confirm the truth of all these points with those strong arguments that might be urged in their favour, but rather that we should take them for granted, as being sufficiently established by the common consent of mankind, we shall, however, subjoin a few thoughts on each of them separately, with as great brevity and perspicuity as we can.

1. *That there is a God.* And here I cannot help fearing, that when we endeavour to confirm this leading truth, with regard to the first and uncreated Being, by a long and laboured series of arguments, we may seem, instead of a service, to do a kind of injury to God and man both; for why should we use the pitiful light of a candle to discover the sun, and eagerly go about to prove the being of him who gave being to every thing else; who alone exists necessarily, nay, we may boldly say, who alone exists, seeing all other things were by him extracted out of nothing, and, when compared with him, are nothing, and even less

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than nothing, and vanity. And would not any man think himself insulted, should it be suspected, that he doubted of the being of him, without whom he could neither doubt, nor think, nor be at all? This persuasion, without doubt, is innate, and strongly impressed upon the mind of man, if any thing at all can be said to be so. Nor does Jamblicus scruple to say, that "to know God is our very being;" and in another place, that "it is the very being of the soul to know God, on whom it depends." Nor would he think amiss, who in this should espouse the opinion of Plato: for to know this is nothing more than to call to remembrance what was formerly impressed upon the mind; and when one forgets it—which, alas! is too much the case of us all—he has as many remembrancers, so to speak, within him, as he has members, and as many without him, as the individuals of the vast variety of creatures to be seen around him. Let, therefore, the indolent soul, that has almost forgotten God, be roused up, and every now and then say to itself, "Behold this beautiful starry heaven," &c.

But because we have too many of that sort of fools that say in their heart, "There is no God;" and if we are *not to answer a fool so as to be like unto him*, yet we are, by all means, to *answer him according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit;* again, because a criminal forgetfulness of this leading truth, is the sole source of all the wickedness in the world; and, finally, because it may not be quite unprofitable nor unpleasant, even to the best of men, sometimes to recollect their thoughts on this subject, but, on the contrary, a very pleasant exercise to every well disposed mind to reflect upon what a solid and unshaken foundation the whole fabric of religion is built, and to think and speak of the eternal Fountain of goodness and of all other beings, and consequently of his necessary existence; we reckon it will not be amiss to give a few thoughts upon it. Therefore, not to insist upon several arguments which are urged with great advantage on this subject, we shall produce only one or two, and shall reason thus—

It is by all means necessary, that there should be some eternal Being, otherwise nothing could ever have been; since it must be a most shocking contradiction to say, that

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any thing could have produced itself out of nothing. But if we say, that any thing existed from eternity, it is most agreeable to reason, that that should be an eternal mind, or thinking Being, that so the noblest property may be ascribed to the most exalted Being. Nay, that eternal Being must of absolute necessity excel in wisdom and power, and indeed in every other perfection, since it must itself be uncreated, and the cause and origin of all the creatures; otherwise some difficulty will remain concerning their production. And thus all the parts of the universe, taken singly, suggest arguments in favour of their Creator.

The beautiful order of the universe, and the mutual relation that subsists between all its parts, present us with another strong and convincing argument. This order is itself an effect, and indeed a wonderful one; and it is also evidently distinct from the things themselves, taken singly; therefore it must proceed from some cause, and a cause endowed with superior wisdom; for it would be the greatest folly, as well as impudence, to say it could be owing to mere chance. Now it could not proceed from man, nor could it be owing to any concert or mutual agreement between the things themselves, separately considered, seeing the greatest part of them are evidently incapable of consultation and concert. It must, therefore, proceed from some one superior Being, and that being is GOD, "who commanded the stars to move by stated laws, the fruits of the earth to be produced at different seasons, the changeable moon to shine with borrowed light, and the sun with his own."

He is the monarch of the universe, and the most absolute monarch in nature; for who else assigned to every rank of creatures its particular form and uses, so that the stars, subjected to no human authority or laws, should be placed on high, and serve to bring about to the earth and the inhabitants thereof, the regular returns of day and night, and distinguish the seasons of the year? Let us take, in particular, any one species of sublunary things—for instance, man, the noblest of all—and see how he came by the form wherewith he is invested, that frame or constitution of body, that vigour of mind, and that precise rank in the nature of things, which he now obtains, and no other. He must certainly either have made choice of

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these things for himself, or must have had them assigned him by another, whom we must consider as the principal actor, and sole architect of the whole fabric. That he made choice of them for himself, nobody will imagine; for either he made this choice before he had any existence of his own, or after he began to be: but it is not easy to say which of these suppositions is most absurd. It remains, therefore, that he must be indebted for all he enjoys to the mere good pleasure of his great and all-wise Creator, who framed his earthly body in such a wonderful and surprising manner, animated him with his own breath, and thus introduced him into this great palace of his which we now behold, where his manifold wisdom, most properly so called, displays itself so gloriously in the whole machine and in every one of its wonderfully variegated parts.

The first argument, taken from the very being of things, may be further illustrated by the same instance of man; for unless the first man was created, we must suppose an infinite series of generations from eternity, and so the human race must be supposed independent, and to owe its being to itself. But, by this hypothesis, mankind came into the world by generation; therefore every individual of the race owes its being to another; consequently the whole race is from itself, and at the same time from another; which is absurd: therefore the hypothesis implies a plain and evident contradiction. "O immense wisdom that produced the world! Let us for ever admire the riches and skill of thy right hand;" often viewing with attention thy wonders, and, while we view them, frequently crying out with the divine psalmist, *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all. The earth is full of thy riches! From everlasting to everlasting thou art God, and besides thee, there is no other.* And with Hermes, "The Father of all, being himself understanding, life, and brightness, created man like himself, and cherished him as his own son. Thou Creator of universal nature, who hast extended the earth, who poisest the heavens, and commandest the waters to flow from all the parts of the sea, we praise thee, who art the one exalted God, for by thy will all things are perfected." The same author asserts, that "God was prior to human nature."

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In vain would any one endeavour to evade the force of our argument, by substituting nature in the place of God, as the principle and cause of this beautiful order; for either, by nature, he understands the particular frame and composition of every single thing—which would be saying nothing at all to the purpose in hand, because it is evident, that this manifold nature, which in most instances is quite void of reason, could never be the cause of that beautiful order and harmony which is every where conspicuous throughout the whole system; or, he means a universal and intelligent nature, disposing and ordering every thing to advantage. But this is only another name for God; of whom it may be said, in a sacred sense, that he, as an infinite nature and mind, pervades and fills all his works —not as an informing form, according to the expression of the schools, and as the part of a compounded whole, which is the idlest fiction that can be imagined; for, at this rate, he must not only be a part of the vilest insects, but also of stocks, and stones, and clods of earth; but a pure, unmixed nature, which orders and governs all things with the greatest freedom and wisdom, and supports them with unwearied and almighty power. In this acceptation, when you name nature, you mean God. Seneca's words are very apposite to this purpose. "Whithersoever you turn yourself, you see God meeting you. Nothing excludes his presence. He fills all his works. Therefore it is in vain for thee, most ungrateful of all men, to say thou art not indebted to God, but to nature, because they are, in fact, the same. If thou hadst received any thing from Seneca, and should say, thou owedst it to Annæus or Lucius, thou wouldst not thereby change thy creditor, but only his name, because whether thou mentionest his name or his surname, his person is still the same."

An evident and most natural consequence of this universal and necessary idea of a God, is his unity. All who mention the term God, intend to convey by it the idea of the first, most exalted, necessarily existent, and infinitely perfect Being: and it is plain there can be but one Being endued with all these perfections. Nay, even the polytheism that prevailed among the heathen nations was not carried so far, but that they acknowledged one God, by way of eminence, as supreme and absolutely above all the

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rest, whom they styled the greatest and best of Beings, and the Father of gods and men. From him all the rest had their being and all that they were, and from him also they had the title of gods, but still in a limited and subordinate sense. In confirmation of this, we meet with very many of the clearest testimonies with regard to the unity of God in the works of all the heathen authors. That of Sophocles is very remarkable; "There is indeed," says he, "one God, and but one, who has made the heavens, and the wide extended earth, the blue surges of the sea, and the strength of the winds."

As to the mystery of the sacred Trinity, which has a near and necessary connexion with the present subject, I always thought it was to be received and adored with the most humble faith, but by no means to be curiously searched into, or perplexed with the absurd questions of the schoolmen. We fell by an arrogant ambition after knowledge; by mere faith we rise again, and are reinstated. And this mystery indeed, rather than any other, seems to be a tree of knowledge, prohibited to us while we sojourn in these mortal bodies. This most profound mystery, though obscurely represented by the shadows of the Old Testament, rather than clearly revealed, was not unknown to the most ancient and celebrated doctors among the Jews, nor altogether unattested, however obstinately later authors may maintain the contrary. Nay, learned men have observed, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are expressly acknowledged in the books of the Cabalists, and they produce surprising things to this purpose out of the book of Zohar, which is ascribed to R. Simeon, Ben. Joch, and some other Cabalistical writers. Nay, the book just now mentioned, after saying a great deal concerning the Three in one essence, adds, that "this secret will not be revealed to all till the coming of the Messias." I insist not upon what is said of the name consisting of twelve letters, and another larger one of forty-two, as containing a fuller explication of that most sacred name, which they call Hammephorash.

Nor is it improbable, that some dawn, at least, of this mystery had reached even the heathen philosophers. There are some who think they can prove, by arguments of no inconsiderable weight, that Anaxagoras, by his νοῦς, or

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mind, meant nothing but the Son or Wisdom that made the world. But the testimonies are clearer, which you find frequently among the Platonic philosophers concerning the Three subsisting from one, Moreover, they all call the self-existent Being the "creating word," or "the mind and the soul of the world." But the words of the Egyptian Hermes are very surprising; "The mind, which is God, together with his word, produced another creating mind; nor do they differ from one another, for their union is life."

But what we now insist upon is, the plain and evident necessity of one supreme, and therefore of one only principle of all things, and the harmonious agreement of mankind in the belief of the absolute necessity of this same principle.

This is the God whom we admire, whom we worship, whom we entirely love, or, at least, whom we desire to love above all things; whom we can neither express in words, nor conceive in our thoughts; and the less we are capable of these things, so much the more necessary it is to adore him with the profoundest humility, and to love him with the greatest intenseness and fervour.

LECTURE VIII.

Of the Worship of God, Providence, and the Law given to Man.

THOUGH I thought it by no means proper to proceed without taking notice of the arguments that serve to confirm the first and leading truth of religion, and the general consent of mankind with regard to it, yet the end I chiefly proposed to myself was, to examine this consent, and point out its force, and the use to which it ought to be applied; to call off your minds from the numberless disputes about religion, to the contemplation of this universal agreement, as into a more quiet and peaceable country; and to show you, what I wish I could effectually convince you of, that there is more weight and force in this universal harmony and consent of mankind in a few of the great and universal principles, to confirm our minds in the sum and substance of religion, than the innumerable disputes that still

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subsist with regard to the other points ought to have to discourage us in the exercise of true piety, or in the least to weaken our faith.

In consequence of this, it will be proper to lay before you the other propositions contained in this general consent of mankind with regard to religion. Now the first of these being, that there is one, and but one eternal principle of all things; from this it will most naturally follow, that this principle or Deity is to be honoured with some worship; and from these two taken together, it must be, with the same necessity, concluded, that there is a providence, or that God doth not despise or neglect the world which he has created, and mankind by whom he ought to be and actually is worshiped; but governs them with the most watchful and perfect wisdom.

All mankind acknowledge, that some kind of worship is due to God, and that to perform it is by all means worthy of man; and upon the minds of all is strongly impressed that sentiment which Lactantius expressed with great perspicuity and brevity in these words, "To know God is wisdom, and to worship him, justice."

In this worship some things are natural, and therefore of more general use among all nations, such as vows and prayers, hymns and praises; as also some bodily gestures, especially such as seem most proper to express reverence and respect. All the rest, for the most part, actually consist of ceremonies, either of divine institution or of human invention. Of this sort are sacrifices, the use whereof in old times very much prevailed in all nations, and still continues in the greater part of the world.

A Majesty so exalted, no doubt, deserves the highest honour, and the sublimest praises on his own account; but still, if men were not persuaded that the testimonies of homage and respect they offer to God, were known to him, and accepted of him, even on this account all human piety would cool and presently disappear; and indeed prayers and vows, whereby we implore the divine assistance and solicit blessings from above, offered to a God who neither hears nor in the least regards them, would be an instance of the greatest folly; nor is it to be imagined, that all nations would ever have agreed in the extravagant custom of addressing themselves to gods that did not hear.

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Supposing, therefore, any religion or divine worship, it immediately follows therefrom, that there is also a providence. This was acknowledged of old, and is still acknowledged by the generality of all nations throughout the world, and the most famous philosophers. There were indeed particular men, and some whole sects, that denied it. Others, who acknowledged a kind of Providence, confined it to the heavens, among whom was Aristotle, as appears from his book "De Mundo;" which notion is justly slighted by Nazianzen, who calls it "A mere limited Providence." Others allowed it some place in things of this world, but only extended it to generals, in opposition to individuals. But others, with the greatest justice, acknowledged that all things, even the most minute and inconsiderable, were the objects of it. "He fills his own work, nor is he only over it, but also in it." Moreover, if we ascribe to God the origin of this fabric and all things in it, it will be most absurd and inconsistent to deny him the preservation and government of it; for, if he does not preserve and govern his creatures, it must be either because he cannot or because he will not; but his infinite power and wisdom make it impossible to doubt of the former, and his infinite goodness of the latter. The words of Epictetus are admirable. "There were five great men," said he, "of which number were Ulysses and Socrates, who said that they could not so much as move without the knowledge of God." And in another place, "If I were a nightingale, I would act the part of a nightingale; if a swan, that of a swan; now that I am a reasonable creature, it is my duty to praise God."

It would be needless to show, that so great a fabric could not stand without some Being properly qualified to watch over it; that the unerring course of the stars is not the effect of blind fortune; that what chance sets on foot, is often put out of order, and soon falls to pieces; that, therefore, this unerring and regular velocity is owing to the influence of a fixed, eternal law. It is, to be sure, a very great miracle, merely to know so great a multitude and such a vast variety of things, not only particular towns, but also provinces and kingdoms, even the whole earth, and all the myriads of creatures that crawl upon the earth, and all their thoughts; in a word, at the same in-

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stant to hear and see all that happens on both hemispheres of this globe. How much more wonderful must it be, to rule and govern all these at once, and, as it were, with one glance of the eye! When we consider this, may we not cry out with the poet Boethius, "O thou great Creator of heaven and earth, who governest the world with constant and unerring sway, who biddest time to flow throughout ages, and continuing unmoved thyself, givest motion to every thing else, &c."

It is also a great comfort to have the faith of this Providence constantly impressed upon the mind, so as to have recourse to it in the midst of all confusions, whether public or private, and all calamities from without or from within; to be able to say, The great King, who is also my Father, is the supreme ruler of all these things, and with him all my interests are secure; to stand firm, with Moses, when no relief appears, and to look for the salvation of God from on high; and, finally, in every distress, when all hope of human assistance is swallowed up in despair, to have the remarkable saying of the father of the faithful stamped upon the mind, and to silence all fears with these comfortable words, *God will provide*. In a word, there is nothing that can so effectually conform the heart of man, and his inmost thoughts, and consequently the whole tenour of his life, to the most perfect rule of religion and piety, as a firm belief and frequent meditation on this divine Providence, which superintends and governs the world. He who is firmly persuaded, that an exalted God of infinite wisdom and purity is constantly present with him and sees all that he thinks or acts, will, to be sure, have no occasion to overawe his mind with the imaginary presence of a Lælius or a Cato. Josephus assigns this as the source or root of Abel's purity. "In all his actions," says he, "he considered that God was present with him, and therefore made virtue his constant study."

Moreover, the heathen nations acknowledge this superintendence of divine Providence over human affairs in this very respect, and that it is exercised in observing the morals of mankind, and in distributing rewards and punishments. But this supposes some law or rule, either revealed from heaven or stamped upon the hearts of men, to be the measure and test of moral good and evil, that is,

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of virtue and vice. Man therefore, is not Ζῶον ἄνομον, a lawless creature, but capable of a law and actually born under one, which he himself is also ready to own. "We are born in a kingdom," says the Rabbinical philosopher, "and to obey God is liberty." But this doctrine, however perspicuous and clear in itself, seems to be a little obscured by one cloud, that is, the extraordinary success which bad men often meet with, and the misfortunes and calamities to which virtue is frequently exposed. The saying of Brutus, "O wretched virtue, thou art regarded as nothing!" is well known; as are also those elegant verses of the poet, containing a lively picture of the perplexity of a mind wavering and at a loss upon this subject: "My mind," says he, "has often been perplexed with difficulties and doubts, whether the gods regard the affairs of this earth, or whether there is no Providence at all;—for when I considered the order and disposition of the world, and the boundaries set to the sea, I thence concluded, that all things were secured by the providence of God;—but when I saw the affairs of men involved in so much darkness and confusion, &c."

But not to insist upon a great many other considerations, which even the philosophy of the heathens suggested in vindication of the doctrine of Providence, there is one consideration of great weight to be set in opposition to the whole of this prejudice, namely, that it is an evidence of a rash and forward mind to pass sentence upon things that are not yet perfect and brought to a final conclusion; which even the Roman stoic and the philosopher of Cheronea insist upon, at large, on this subject. If we will judge from events, let us put off the cause and delay sentence, till the whole series of these events comes before us; and let us not pass sentence upon a successful tyrant, while he is triumphant before our eyes, and while we are quite ignorant of the fate that may be awaiting himself or his son, or, at least, his more remote posterity. The ways of divine justice are wonderful. "Punishment stalks silently, and with a slow pace; it will, however, at last overtake the wicked." But, after all, if we expect another scene of things to be exhibited, not here, but in the world to come, the whole dispute concerning the events of this short and precarious life immediately dis-

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appears and comes to nothing. And to conclude—the consent of wise men, states, and nations on this subject, though it is not quite unanimous and universal, is very great, and ought to have the greatest weight.

But all these maxims we have mentioned are more clearly taught and more firmly established, in the Christian religion, which is of undoubted truth. It has also some doctrines peculiar to itself, annexed to the former, and most closely connected with them, in which the whole Christian world, though by far too much divided with regard to other disputed articles, are unanimously agreed and firmly united together. But of this hereafter.

LECTURE IX.

Of the Pleasure and Utility of Religion.

THOUGH Lucretius, the author of the following passage, was a great proficient in the mad philosophy of Epicurus, yet he had truth strongly on his side, when he said, that "nothing was more pleasant than to be stationed on the lofty temples, well defended and secured by the pure and peaceable doctrines of the wise philosophers."

Now can any doctrine be imagined more wise, more pure and peaceable, and more sacred, than that which flowed from the most perfect Fountain of wisdom and purity, which was sent down from heaven to earth, that it might guide all its followers to that happy place whence it took its rise! It is, to be sure, the wisdom of mankind to know God, and their indispensable duty to worship him. Without this, men of the brightest parts and greatest learning seem to be born with excellent talents only to make themselves miserable; and, according to the expression of the wisest of kings, *He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.* We must, therefore, first of all, consider this as a sure and settled point, that religion is the sole foundation of human peace and felicity. This even the profane scoffers at religion are, in some sort, obliged to own, though much against their will, even while they are pointing their wit against it; for nothing is more commonly to be heard from them, than that the whole doctrine of religion was invented by some wise men to

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encourage the practice of justice and virtue through the world. Surely then religion, whatever else may be said of it, must be a matter of the highest value, since it is found necessary to secure advantages of so very great importance. But, in the mean time, how unhappy is the case of integrity and virtue, if what they want to support them is merely fictitious, and they cannot keep their ground but by means of a monstrous forgery! But far be it from us to entertain such an absurdity! The first rule of righteousness cannot be otherwise than right, nor is there any thing more nearly allied or more friendly to virtue, than truth.

But religion is not only highly conducive to all the great advantages of human life, but is also, at the same time, most pleasant and delightful. Nay, if it is so useful and absolutely necessary to the interests of virtue, it must, for this very reason, be also pleasant; unless one will call in question a maxim universally approved by all wise men, that "life cannot be agreeable without virtue;" a maxim of such irrefragable and undoubted truth, that it was adopted even by Epicurus himself.

How great, therefore, must have been the madness of that noted Grecian philosopher, who, while he openly maintained the dignity and pleasantness of virtue, at the same time employed the whole force of his understanding to ruin and sap its foundations! For, that this was his fixed purpose, Lucretius not only owns, but also boasts of it, and loads him with ill-advised praises for endeavouring, through the whole course of his philosophy, to free the minds of men from all the bonds and ties of religion; as if there were no possible way to make them happy and free, without involving them in the guilt of sacrilege and atheism!—as if to eradicate all sense of a Deity out of the mind were the only way to free it from the heaviest chains and fetters! though, in reality, this would be effectually robbing man of all his valuable jewels, of his golden crown and chain, all the riches, ornaments, and pleasures of his life: which is inculcated at large and with great eloquence, by a greater and more divine master of wisdom, the royal author of the Proverbs, who, speaking of the precepts of religion, says, *They shall be an ornament of grace unto thine head, and chains about thy neck:* and, of religion, under the name of wisdom, *If*

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thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hidden treasure. Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom, and with all thy getting, get understanding.

And it is indeed very plain, that if it were possible entirely to dissolve all the bonds and ties of religion, yet, that it should be so, would certainly be the interest of none but the worst and most abandoned part of mankind. All the good and wise, if the matter were freely left to their choice, would rather have the world governed by the supreme and most perfect Being, mankind subjected to his just and righteous law, and all the affairs of men superintended by his watchful providence, than that it should be otherwise. Nor do they believe the doctrines of religion with aversion or any sort of reluctance, but embrace them with pleasure, and are excessively glad to find them true. So that, if it were possible to abolish them entirely, and any person, out of mere good-will to them, should attempt to do it, they would look upon the favour as highly prejudicial to their interest, and think his good-will more hurtful than the keenest hatred. Nor would any one, in his wits, choose to live in the world at large and without any sort of government, more than he would think it eligible to be put on board a ship without a helm or pilot, and, in this condition, to be tossed amidst rocks and quicksands. On the other hand, can any thing give greater consolation or more substantial joy, than to be firmly persuaded, not only that there is an infinitely good and wise Being, but also that this Being preserves and continually governs the universe which himself has framed, and holds the reins of all things in his powerful hand, that he is our father; that we and all our interests are his constant concern; and that, after we have sojourned a short while here below, we shall be again taken into his immediate presence? Or can this wretched life be attended with any sort of satisfaction, if it is divested of this divine faith, and bereaved of such a blessed hope?

Moreover, every one who thinks a generous fortitude and purity of mind preferable to the charms and muddy

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pleasures of the flesh, finds all the precepts of religion, not only not grievous, but exceedingly pleasant and extremely delightful. So that, upon the whole, the saying of Hermes is very consistent with the nature of things, "There is one, and but one good thing among men, and that is religion." Even the vulgar could not bear the degenerate expression of the player who called out upon the stage, "Money is the chief good among mankind." But, should any one say, "Religion is the principal good of mankind," no objection could be made against it; for, without doubt, it is the only object the beauties whereof engage the love both of God and man.

But the principal things in religion, as I have frequently observed, are just conceptions of God. Now concerning this infinite Being, some things are known by the light of nature and reason, others only by the revelation which he hath been pleased to make of himself from heaven. That there is a God, is the distinct voice of every man, and of every thing without him. How much more then shall we be confirmed in the belief of this truth, if we attentively view the whole creation, and the wonderful order and harmony that subsists between all the parts of the whole system! It is quite unnecessary to show, that so great a fabric could never have been brought into being without an all-wise and powerful Creator; nor could it now subsist without the same almighty Being to support and preserve it. "Let men therefore make this their constant study," says Lactantius, "even to know their common Parent and Lord, whose power can never be perfectly known, whose greatness cannot be fathomed, nor his eternity comprehended." When the mind of man, with its faculties, comes to be once intensely fixed upon him, all other objects disappearing and being, as it were, removed quite out of sight, it is entirely at a stand and overpowered, nor can it possibly proceed further. But concerning the doctrine of this vast volume of the works of God, and that still brighter light which shines forth in the scriptures, we shall speak more fully hereafter.

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LECTURE X.

Of the Decrees of God.

As the glory and brightness of the divine Majesty is so great, that the strongest human eye cannot bear the direct rays of it, he has exhibited himself to be viewed in the glass of those works which he created at first, and, by his unwearied hand, continually supports and governs. Nor are we allowed to view his eternal counsels and purposes through any other medium than this. So that in our catechisms, especially the shorter one designed for the instruction of the ignorant, it might perhaps have been full as proper to have passed over the awful speculation concerning the divine decrees, and to have proceeded directly to the consideration of the works of God: but the thoughts you find in it on the subject are few, sober, clear, and certain; and, in explaining them, I think it most reasonable and most safe to confine ourselves within these limits in any audience whatever, but especially in this congregation, consisting of youths, not to say, in a great measure, of boys. Seeing, therefore, the decrees of God are mentioned in our catechism, and it would not be proper to pass over in silence a matter of so great moment, I shall accordingly lay before you some few thoughts upon this arduous subject.

And here, if any where, we ought, according to the common saying, to reason but in few words. I should indeed think it very improper to do otherwise; for such theories ought to be cautiously touched, rather than be spun out to a great length. One thing we may confidently assert, that all those things which the great Creator produces in different periods of time, were perfectly known to him, and, as it were, present with him, from eternity; and that every thing that happens, throughout the several ages of the world, proceeds in the same order and same precise manner, as the eternal Mind at first intended it should; that none of his counsels can be disappointed or rendered ineffectual, or in the least changed or altered by any event whatsoever. *Known to God are all his works,* says the apostle in the council of Jerusalem; and the son

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of Sirach says, *God sees from everlasting to everlasting, and nothing is wonderful in His sight.* Nothing is new or unexpected to him; nothing can come to pass that he has not foreseen. And his first thoughts are so wise, that they admit no second ones that can be supposed wiser. And this stability and immutability of the divine decrees is asserted even by the Roman philosopher. "It is necessary," says he, "that the same things be always pleasing to him, who can never be pleased but with what is best."

Every artist, to be sure, as you also well know, works according to some pattern, which is the immediate object of his mind; and this pattern, in the all-wise Creator, must necessarily be entirely perfect, and every way complete. And if this is what Plato intended by his ideas, which not a few, and these by no means unlearned, think very likely, his own scholar, the great Stagyrite, and your favourite philosopher, had surely no reason so often and so bitterly to inveigh against them. Be this as it may, all who acknowledge God to be the author of this wonderful fabric, and all these things in it which succeed one another in their turns, cannot possibly doubt, that he has brought and continues to bring them all about, according to that most perfect pattern subsisting in his eternal councils; and that these things that we call casual are all unalterably fixed and determined to him; for, according to that saying of the philosopher, "Where there is most wisdom, there is least chance," and therefore surely where there is infinite wisdom, there is nothing left to chance at all.

This maxim, concerning the eternal councils of the supreme Sovereign of the world, besides that it every where shines clearly in the books of the sacred scriptures, is also in itself so evident and consistent with reason, that we meet with it in almost all the works of the philosophers, and often also in those of the poets. Nor does it appear, that they mean any thing else, at least, for the most part, by the term fate: though you may meet with some things in their works, which, I own, sound a little harsh, and can scarcely be sufficiently softened by any, even the most favourable interpretation.

But whatever else may seem to be comprehended under the term fate, whether taken in the mathematical or physical sense, as some are pleased to distinguish, it must

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at last of necessity be resolved into the appointment and good pleasure of the supreme Governor of the world. If even the blundering astrologers and fortune-tellers acknowledge, that the wise man has dominion over the stars, how much more evident is it, that all these things, and all their power and influence, are subject and subservient to the decrees of the all-wise God! Whence the saying of the Hebrews, "There is no planet to Israel."

And according as all these things in the heavens above and the earth beneath are daily regulated and directed by the eternal King, in the same precise manner were they all from eternity ordered and disposed by him, who *worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will*, who is more ancient than the sea and the mountains, or even the heavens themselves.

These things we are warranted and it is safe to believe; but what perverseness or rather madness is it to endeavour to break into the sacred repositories of heaven, and pretend to accommodate the secrets of the divine kingdom to the measures and methods of our weak capacities! To say the truth, I acknowledge that I am astonished and greatly at a loss, when I hear learned men and professors of theology talking presumptuously about the order of the divine decrees, and when I read such things in their works. "Paul," says St. Chrysostom, "considering this awful subject as an immense sea, was astonished at it, and viewing the vast abyss, started back, and cried out with a loud voice, *O the depth!*" Nor is there much more sobriety or moderation in the many notions that are entertained, and the disputes that are commonly raised, about reconciling these divine decrees with the liberty and free-will of man.

It is indeed true, that neither religion nor right reason will suffer the actions and designs of men, and consequently even the very motion of the will, to be exempted from the empire of the counsel and good pleasure of God. Even the books of the heathens are filled with most express testimonies of the most absolute sovereignty of God, even with regard to these. The sentiments of Homer are well known, and with him agrees the tragic poet Euripides. "O Jupiter," says he, "why are we wretched mortals called wise? For we depend entirely upon thee,

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and we do whatever thou intendest we should." And it would be easy to bring together a vast collection of such sayings, but these are sufficient for our present purpose.

They always seemed to me to act a very ridiculous part, who contend, that the effect of the divine decrees is absolutely irreconcilable with human liberty, because the natural and necessary liberty of a rational creature is, to act or choose from a rational motive, or spontaneously, and of purpose. But who sees not, that, on the supposition of the most absolute decree, this liberty is not taken away, but rather established and confirmed? For the decree is, that such a one shall make choice of or do some particular thing freely; and whoever pretends to deny that whatever is done or chosen, whether good or indifferent, is so done or chosen, or, at least, may be so, espouses an absurdity. But, in a word, the great difficulty in all this dispute is, that with regard to the origin of evil. Some distinguish, and justly, the substance of the action, as you call it, or that which is physical in the action, from the morality of it. This is of some weight, but whether it takes away the whole difficulty, I will not pretend to say. Believe me, it is an abyss; it is an abyss never to be perfectly sounded by any plummet of human understanding. Should any one say, "I am not to be blamed, but Jove and Fate," he will not get off so, but may be nonplused by turning his own wit against him. The servant of Zeno, the Stoic philosopher, being caught in an act of theft, either with a design to ridicule his master's doctrine, or to avail himself of it in order to evade punishment, said, "It was my fate to be a thief." "And to be punished for it," said Zeno. Wherefore, if you will take my advice, withdraw your minds from a curious search into this mystery, and turn them directly to the study of piety, and a due reverence to the awful majesty of God. Think and speak of God and his secrets with fear and trembling, but dispute very little about them; and if you would not undo yourselves, beware of disputing with him. If you transgress in any thing, blame yourselves: if you do any good, or repent of evil, offer thanksgiving to God. This is what I earnestly recommend to you; in this I acquiesce myself; and to this, when much tossed and distressed with doubt and difficulties, I had recourse, as

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to a safe harbour. If any of you think proper, he may apply to men of greater learning; and let him take care, he meet not with such as have more forwardness and presumption.

LECTURE XI.

Of the Creation of the World.

WHOEVER looks upon this great system of the universe, of which he himself is but a very small part, with a little more than ordinary attention, unless his mind is become quite brutish within him, it will, of necessity, put him upon considering whence this beautiful frame of things proceeded, and what was its first original; or, in the words of the poet Virgil, "from what principles all the elements were formed, and how all the various parts of the world at first came together."

Now as we have already observed in our dissertation concerning God, that the mind rises directly from the consideration of this visible world to that of its invisible Creator, so, from the contemplation of the first and infinite Mind, it descends to this visible fabric; and again the contemplation of this latter determines it to return with the greatest pleasure and satisfaction to that eternal Fountain of goodness and of every thing that exists. Nor is this a vicious and faulty circle, but the constant course of a pious soul, travelling, as it were, backwards and forwards from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth: a notion quite similar to that of the angels ascending and descending upon the ladder which Jacob saw in his vision. But this contemplation by all means requires a pure and divine temper of mind, according to the maxim of the philosopher; "He that would see God and goodness must first be himself good, and like the Deity." And those who have the eyes of their mind pure and bright, will sooner be able to read in those objects that are exposed to the outward eye the great and evident characters of his eternal Power and Godhead.

We shall, therefore, now advance some thoughts upon the creation, which was the first and most stupendous of all the divine works; and the rather, because some of the

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philosophers, who were, to be sure, positive in asserting the being of a God, did not acknowledge him to be the Author or Creator of the world. As for us, according to that saying in the Epistle to the Hebrews, *by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.* Of this, we have a distinct history in the first book of Moses and of the sacred scriptures which we receive as divine. And this same doctrine, the prophets and apostles, and, together with them, all the sacred writers frequently repeat in their sermons and writings, as the great foundation of faith and of all true religion. For which reason, it ought to be diligently inculcated upon the minds of all, even those of the most ignorant, as far as they are able to conceive and believe it; though, to be sure, it contains in it so many mysteries, that they are sufficient not only to exercise the most acute and learned understandings, but even far to exceed their capacities and quite overpower them: which the Jewish doctors seem to have been so sensible, or, if I may use the expression, so over sensible of, that they admitted not their disciples to look into the three first chapters of Genesis, till they arrived at the age required for entering on the priestly office.

Although the faith of this doctrine immediately depends upon the authority and testimony of the supreme God of truth; for, as St. Ambrose expresses it, "To whom should I give greater credit concerning God, than to God himself?" it is however so agreeable to reason, that if any one choose to enter into the dispute, he will find the strongest arguments presenting themselves in confirmation of the faith of it, but those on the opposite side, if any such there be that deserve the name, quite frivolous and of no manner of force. Tatian declared, that no argument more effectually determined him to believe the scriptures and embrace the Christian faith, than "the consistent intelligible account they gave of the creation of the universe."

Let any one that pleases choose what other opinion he will adopt upon this subject, or, as it is a matter of doubt and obscurity, any of the other hypotheses he thinks most feasible. Is he for the atoms of Epicurus, dancing at random in an empty space, and, after innumerable trials, throwing themselves at last into the beautiful fabric which we behold, and that merely by a kind of lucky hit, or

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fortunate throw of the dice, without any Amphion with his harp to charm them by his music, and lead them into the building? To say the truth, the Greek philosopher had dreamed these things very prettily, or, according to more probable accounts, borrowed them from two other blundering philosophers, Democritus and Leucippus, though he used all possible art to conceal it, that he might have to himself the whole glory of this noble invention. But whoever first invented or published this hypothesis, how, pray, will he persuade us that things are actually so? By what convincing arguments will he prove them? Or what credible witnesses will he produce to attest his facts? For it would neither be modest nor decent for him or his followers to expect implicit faith in a matter truly philosophical and physical, and at the same time of so great importance; especially as it is their common method smartly to ridicule and superciliously to despise the rest of mankind, as being, according to their opinion, too credulous in matters of religion. But what we have now said is more than enough upon an hypothesis so silly, monstrous, and inconsistent.

After leaving the Epicureans, there is no other noted shift that I know of, remaining for one that rejects the doctrine of the creation, but only that fiction of the Peripatetic school, concerning the eternity of the world. This Aristotle is said to have borrowed from a Pythagorean philosopher, named Ocellus Lucanus, who, in that instance, seems to have deserted not only the doctrine of his master, Pythagoras, but also that of all the more ancient philosophers. It is true, two or three others are named, Parmenio, Melissus, &c., who are suspected to have been of the same sentiments with Ocellus, but this is a matter of uncertainty, and therefore to be left undetermined. And indeed both Aristotle and Ocellus seem to have done this at random or without proof, as they have advanced no arguments in favour of their new doctrine, that can be thought very favourable, much less cogent and convincing.

It is surely impossible to demonstrate the truth of their opinion à priori; nor did these authors attempt it. They only endeavoured to muster up some difficulties against the production of the world in time, the great weakness whereof any one who is but tolerably acquainted with the

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Christian religion will easily perceive. Aristotle's arguments rather make against some notions espoused by the old philosophers, or rather forged by himself, than against the doctrine of the creation. Nay, he himself sometimes speaks with great diffidence of his own opinion on this subject, particularly in his topics, where, among other logical problems, he proposes this as one, "Whether the world existed from eternity or not."

On the contrary, that the world has evident marks of novelty, is acknowledged by Lucretius in a remarkable passage of his poem, which is very well known. "Besides," says he, "if the earth and the heavens were not originally created, but existed from eternity, why did not earlier poets describe the remarkable actions of their times long before the Theban war and the destruction of Troy? But, in my opinion, the universe is not of old standing, the world is but of late establishment, and it is not long since it had its beginning." And more to that purpose. But, besides this, if we duly consider the matter, and acknowledge the course of the stars not only to be owing to a first mover, but also that the whole fabric, with all the creatures therein, derive their existence from some supreme Mind who is the only fountain of being, we must certainly conclude, that that self-existent principle, or source of all being, is by all means eternal; but there is no necessity at all, that we should suppose all other things to be coeval with it; nay, if it is not absolutely necessary, it is at least highly reasonable and consistent, to believe the contrary. For, that this world, compounded of so many and such heterogeneous parts, should proceed, by way of natural and necessary emanation, from that one first, purest, and most simple nature, nobody, I imagine, could believe, or in the least suspect. Can it possibly be thought that mortality should proceed from the Immortal, corruption from the Incorruptible, and, what ought never to be so much as mentioned, even worms, the vilest animalculas, and most abject insects, from the best, most exalted, and most blessed Majesty? But, if he produced all these things freely, merely out of his good pleasure, and with the facility that constantly attends almighty power, how much more consistent is it to believe, that this was done in time than to imagine it was from eternity!

It is a very difficult matter to argue at all about that,

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the nature whereof our most enlarged thoughts can never comprehend. And though among philosophers and divines it is disputed, whether such a production from eternity be possible or not, there is probably something concealed in the nature of the thing, though unknown to us, that might suggest a demonstration of the impossibility of this conceit; for what is finite in bulk, power, and every other respect, seems scarcely capable of this infinity of duration; and divines generally place eternity among the incommunicable attributes of God, as they are called. It seems, to be sure, most agreeable to reason, and for ought we know, it is absolutely necessary, that in all external productions by a free agent the cause should be, even in time, prior to the effect; that is, that there must have been some point of time wherein the Being producing did, but the thing produced did not, exist. As to the eternal generation in which we believe, it is within God himself, nor does it constitute any thing without him, or different from his nature and essence. Moreover the eternal production of a created being, of a nature vastly different from the agent that is supposed to produce it and to act freely in that production, implies in its formal conception, as the schools express it, a translation from nonentity into being; whence it seems necessarily to follow, that there must have been some point of time wherein that created being did not exist.

The notions of the Platonists concerning preexistent matter do not concern the present subject; but, to be sure, they are as idle and empty as the imaginary eternity of the world in its present form. As angels were not produced out of matter, it is surely surprising, that those who assert their creation by God should find difficulty in acknowledging the production of other things without preexistent matter, or even of matter itself. The celebrated maxim of the philosophers, that out of nothing, nothing is produced, we receive, but in a different and sounder sense, namely, that nothing can be produced but either from preexistent matter, or by a productive power in which it was virtually contained. And, in this sense, this famous maxim affords an invincible demonstration à posteriori, for the subject is not capable of any other, to prove that there must be some being that existed before any creature, and the unity and eternity of that Being.

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The great Creator of the world, having all things virtually in himself, needed neither matter nor instruments in order to produce them. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.* These were his levers and tools, the word of the Lord, or that effectual act of his will which gave being to all things. "The mighty Lord of all called directly to his holy, intelligent, and creating word, Let there be a sun, and a sun immediately appeared." Here *he spake, and it was done.* "The word and the effect showed themselves together." If you ask what moved infinite goodness to perform this great work, I answer, that very goodness you mention; for if, as they say, it is the nature of goodness to be always communicative, that goodness, to be sure, must be the most diffusive, which is in itself the greatest, the richest, and so very immense, that it cannot be in the least diminished, much less exhausted, by the greatest munificence. Here there is no danger that that should happen, which Cicero prudently cautions us against, in the case of human goodness, namely, that "liberality should undo itself!" for that liberality must be immortal and endless, the treasures whereof are infinite.

Nor is it to be doubted, but from this very goodness together with the immense power and wisdom which shine forth so brightly in the creation and all the creatures, an immense weight of glory is reflected upon the Creator himself, who is the source of all these perfections. Nor must it be denied, that the manifold wisdom of God proposed this end likewise. And there is nothing more certain, than that from all these taken together, his works, his benevolent and diffusive goodness, his power and wisdom illustrated in the creation, and the glory that continually results therefrom; from his wise counsels, and his own most perfect nature, whence all these things flow; nothing is more certain, I say, than that from all these taken together, the divine Majesty enjoys an eternal and inexpressible delight and satisfaction. And thus all things return to that vast and immense ocean, from whence they at first took their rise, according to the expression in the Proverbs, *He hath made all things for himself.* And the words of the song in the Revelations are most express to this purpose; *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and*

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for thy pleasure they are and were created. Nor could it indeed be otherwise, than that he who is the beginning of all things, should also be the end of all; a wonderful beginning without a beginning, and an end without an end. So that, as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews reasons concerning the oath of God, *As he could sware by no greater, he sware by himself;* in like manner we may argue here, as he could propose no greater end or design, he proposed himself. It was the saying of Epicurus, that "the wise man does every thing for his own sake." We who are otherwise taught, should rather say, that the wise man does nothing for his own sake, but all for that of God. But certainly the most exalted and the wisest of all beings, because he is so, must of necessity do all things for himself; yet at the same time, all his dispensations towards his creatures are most bountiful and benevolent.

That the world was made directly and immediately for man is the doctrine, not only of the Stoics, but also of the master of the Peripatetic school. "We are," says he, "in some respect, the end of all things;" and in another place, "Nature has made all things for the sake of man." Cicero speaks to the same purpose; and Lactantius more fully than either. But Moses gives the greatest light on this subject, not only in his history of the creation, but also in Deuteronomy, wherein he warns the Israelites against worshiping angels for this reason; because, says he, "They were created for the service of man." And the sun, in Hebrew, is called Shemesh, which signifies a servant.

But O whither do our hearts stray? Ought we not to dwell upon this pleasant contemplation, and even die in it? I should choose to be quite lost in it, and to be rendered altogether insensible, and, as it were, dead to these earthly trifles that make a noise around us. O sweet reciprocation of mutual delights! *The Lord shall rejoice in his works,* says the psalmist; and presently after, *My meditation of him shall be sweet. I will be glad in the Lord.* Let us look sometimes to the heavens, sometimes to the sea and the earth, with the animals and plants that are therein, and very often to ourselves; and in all these, and in every thing else, but in ourselves particularly, let us contemplate God the common Father of all and our most exalted Creator, and let our contemplation excite our love

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They who have sent the ignorant and unlearned to pictures and images, as books proper for their instruction, have not acted very wisely; nor has that expedient turned out happily or luckily for the advantage of that part of mankind. But surely this great volume or system, which is always open and exposed to the view of all, is admirably adapted to the instruction both of the vulgar and the wise; so that Chrysostom had good reason to call it, "The great book for the learned and unlearned." And the saying of St. Basil is very much to the purpose: "From the beauty of those things which are obvious to the eyes of all, we acknowledge that his inexpressible beauty excels that of all the creatures; and from the magnitude of those visible bodies that surround us we conclude the infinite and immense goodness of their Creator, whose plenitude of power exceeds all thought, as well as expression."

For this very end, it evidently appears that all things were made, and we are the only visible beings that are capable of this contemplation. "The world," says St. Basil, "is a school, or seminary, very proper for the instruction of rational souls in the knowledge of God." We have also the angels, those ministers of fire, to be spectators with us on this theatre. But will any of us venture to conjecture what they felt, and what admiration seized them, when they beheld those new kinds of creatures rising into being, and those unexpected scenes that were successively added to the preceding ones, on each of the six days of that first remarkable week, *when He laid the foundations of the earth, and placed the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*

But O the stupidity of mankind! All those stupendous objects are daily around us, but, because they are constantly exposed to our view, they never affect our minds: so natural is it for us to admire new, rather than grand, objects. Therefore the vast multitude of stars which diversify the beauty of this immense body, does not call the people together; but when any change happens therein, the eyes of all are fixed upon the heavens. "Nobody looks at the sun but when he is obscured; nobody observes the moon, but when she is eclipsed; then nature seems to be in danger; then vain superstition is alarmed, and every one is afraid for himself." "But

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surely," says St. Bernard, concerning the sun and moon, "these are great miracles, very great to be sure; but the first production or creation of all things is a vast miracle, and makes it easy to believe all the rest; so that after it nothing ought to excite our wonder.

LECTURE XII.

Of the Creation of Man.

THIS great theatre being built, besides those spectators who had been but lately placed in the higher seats, it pleased the supreme Creator and Lord to have another company below, as it were, in the area; these he called forth into being by creation, and man was introduced into this area, "to be a spectator of him, and of his works, yet not a spectator only, but also to be the interpreter of them." Nor yet was man placed therein merely to be a spectator and an interpreter; but also in a great measure, to be possessor and lord thereof, or, as it were, the Creator's substitute, in a spacious and convenient house, ready built, and stored with all sorts of useful furniture.

Now that man himself is a grand and noble piece of workmanship appears even from this circumstance, that the most wise Operator, when he was going to create him, thought fit to preface his design with these words, *Let us make man;* so that he was created, not merely by a word of command, like the rest of the creatures, but "by a consultation of the blessed Trinity."

And indeed man is a wonderful composition, the conjunction of heaven and earth—"the breath of God, and the dust of the ground"—the bond of union between the visible and the invisible world—and truly a "world in miniature, a kind of mixed world, nearly related to the other two." Nor is he only a lively epitome and representation of the greater world, but also dignified with the image of his great Creator. He made the heavens and the earth, the sea and the stars, and then all sorts of living creatures; but in the words of the poet, "A more divine creature, and more capable of elevated sentiments, was yet wanting, and one that could rule over the rest; therefore man was born."

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The rest of the creatures, according to the observation of the schoolmen, which is not amiss, had the impression of the divine foot stamped upon them, but not the image of the Deity. These he created, and reviewing them, found them to be good, yet he did not rest in them; but, upon the creation of man, the sabbath immediately followed. He made man, and then rested, having a creature capable of knowing that he was his Creator, one that could worship him and celebrate his sabbath, whose sins, if he should commit any, he might forgive; and send, clothed with human nature, his only begotten Son *in whom he is* absolutely *well pleased*, and over whom as the person who fulfilled his good pleasure he rejoices for ever, to redeem his favourite creature. By the production of man, the supreme Creator exhibited himself in the most admirable light, and, at the same time, had a creature capable of admiring and loving him; and, as St. Ambrose observes, "one that was under obligation to love his Creator the more ardently, the more wonderfully he perceived himself to be made." "And man," says the same author, "was made a twofooted animal, that he might be as it were one of the inhabitants of the air, that he might aspire at high things, and fly with the wings of sublime thoughts."

And indeed the structure of man is an instance of wonderful art and ingenuity, whether you consider the symmetry of his whole fabric taken together, or all his parts and members separately. Gregory Nyssen speaks very much to the purpose, when he says, "The frame of man is awful and hard to be explained, and contains in it a lively representation of many of the hidden mysteries of God." How wonderful is even the structure of his body! which, after all, is but the earthen case of his soul. Accordingly, it is in the Chaldaic language called "Nidne," which signifies a sheath. How far does the workmanship exceed the materials! And how justly may we say, "What a glorious creature out of the meanest elements!" The psalmist's mind seems to have dwelt upon this meditation till he was quite lost in it; *How fearfully*, says he, *and wonderfully am I made!* And that celebrated physician who studied nature with such unwearied application, in his book upon the structure of the human body, in which after all there is nothing divine, often expresses

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his admiration in these words, "Who is worthy to praise the wisdom and power of the Creator!" and many other such exclamations. The Christian writers, however, are most full upon this subject, particularly St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, and others, who carry their observations so far as the nails and the hair, especially that on the eyelids. And Nyssen, on the words, *Let us make man*, has the following observation. "Man is a grand and noble creature! —How can man be said to be any great matter, seeing he is a mortal creature, subject to a great many passions; from the time of his birth to that of his old age, exposed to a vast many evils and distresses; and of whom it is written, *Lord, what is man that thou shouldest be mindful of him?* The history we have of the production of man delivered me from this difficulty; for we are told, that God took some of the dust of the earth, and out of it formed man; from these words I understood, that man was at once nothing, and yet something very grand." He intended to say that the materials out of which man was made were low, and as it were nothing; but if you consider the wonderful workmanship, how great was the honour conferred upon him! "The earth did not spontaneously produce man, as it did grasshoppers. God did not commit the production of this or that particular creature to his ministering powers; no, the gracious Creator took the earth in his own hand." But besides the noble frame of his body, though it was made of the dust of the earth, the divine breath, and, by means of it, the infusion of a precious soul, mixes heaven and earth together; not indeed in the common acceptation of that term, as if things so vastly different, were promiscuously jumbled together, and the order of nature subverted, but only implying, that the two parts of the human constitution are compounded with inexpressible art, and joined in a close union. As to the misery of the human race, and the contemptible light in which the life of man appears, it is to be ascribed to another source very different from the earthly materials out of which his body was made. That he was created happy, beautiful, and honourable, he owed to his great and good Creator; but he himself is the author of his own misery. And hence it is, that though, with regard to his original and pure nature, we ought, for the strongest reasons, to

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speak more honourably of him than of any other part of the visible world, yet, if we view him in his present circumstances, no part of the creation deserves to be lamented in more mournful strains.

But what words can express, what thought can comprehend, the dignity and powers of that heavenly soul that inhabits this earthly body, and the divine image that is stamped upon it? The philosophers of all ages and nations have been inquiring into the nature of it, and have not yet found it out.

A great many have also amused themselves with whimsical conjectures and fancies, and have endeavoured to discover, by very different methods, a figure of the blessed Trinity in the faculties of the soul. Nor was Methodius satisfied with finding a representation of this mystery in the soul of every particular man, but also imagined he had discovered it in the three first persons of the human race, Adam, Eve, and their first born son; because in them he found unbegotten, begotten, and proceeding, as also unity of nature, and the origination of all mankind. But, not to insist upon these, it is certain, the rational, or intellectual, and immortal soul, so long as it retained its original purity, was adorned with the lively and refulgent image of the Father of Spirits, its eternal Creator; but afterwards, when it became polluted and stained with sin, this image though not immediately quite ruined, was however, miserably obscured and defaced. It is true, the beautiful and erect frame of the human body, which gives it an advantage over all other creatures, and some other external graces that man possesses, may possibly be some reflected rays of the divine excellence; but I should hardly call them the image of God. As St. Ambrose well observes, "How can flesh, which is but earth, be said to be made after the image of God, in whom there is no earth at all? And shall we be said to be like God, because we are of a higher rank than sheep and does?"

The dominion over the rest of the creatures which man enjoys, is a kind of faint shadow of the absolute and unlimited sway of the supreme Majesty of heaven and earth. I dare not however venture to say, it is that image of which we are speaking; but, as those who draw the picture of a king, after laying down the lineaments of the face and body,

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use to add the purple robe and other ensigns of royalty, this dominion may certainly supply the place of these, with regard to this image of God on man. But the lively colours in which the image itself is drawn, are, says Nyssen, "purity, absence of evil, understanding, and speech." For even the eternal Son, and the wisdom of the Father seems to be intended by the philosophers under the term of the Creating Mind; and by the divine apostle John, he is called the Word. To these we have very good ground to add charity, as nothing can be named that renders man more like to God; for "God is love and the fountain of it." It is true, charity is a valuable disposition of the mind, but it also discovers itself in the frame of the human body; for man was made quite defenceless, having neither horns, claws, nor sting, but is naked and harmless, and, as it were, entirely formed for meekness, peace, and charity.

The same author, speaking of the image of God on man, expresses himself as follows: "Wherefore, that you may be like God, exercise liberality and beneficence, study to be innocent, avoid every crime, subdue all the motions of sin, conquer all the beasts that are within you. What, you will say, have I beasts within me? Yes, you have beasts, and a vast number of them. And that you may not think, I intend to insult you, is anger an inconsiderable beast, when it barks in your heart? What is deceit, when it lies hid in a cunning mind? Is it not a fox? Is not the man who is furiously bent upon calumny, a scorpion? Is not the person who is eagerly set on resentment and revenge a venomous viper? What do you say of a covetous man? Is he not a ravenous wolf? And is not the lascivious man, as the prophet expresses it, a neighing horse? Nay, there is no wild beast but is found within us. And do you consider yourself as lord and prince of the wild beasts, because you command those that are without, though you never think of subduing or setting bounds to those that are within you? What advantage have you by your reason, which enables you to overcome lions, if, after all, you yourself are overcome by anger? To what purpose do you rule over the birds, and catch them with gins, if you yourself with the inconstancy of a bird, are hurried hither and thither, and sometimes flying high are ensnared by pride, sometimes brought down and caught by pleasure?

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But as it is shameful for him who rules over nations to be a slave at home, and for the man who sits at the helm of the state to be meanly subjected to the beck of a contemptible harlot or even of an imperious wife, will it not be, in like manner, disgraceful for you, who exercise dominion over the beasts that are without you, to be subject to a great many, and those of the worst sort, that roar and domineer in your distempered mind.

I shall, last of all, here subjoin what some of the ancients have observed, namely, that the nature of the human soul, as it lies hid out of sight, and is to us quite unknown, bears an evident resemblance to that of God, who is himself unsearchable and past finding out."

But when we have well considered all these things, and the many other thoughts of this kind that may occur, may we not cry out, How surprising and shocking is the madness and folly of mankind! the far greater part whereof, as if they had quite forgot their original and native dignity, disparage themselves so far, as to pursue the meanest objects, and shamefully plunge themselves in mud."

The words of Epictetus are divine, and have a wonderful savour of piety. "You go to the city of Olympia," says he, "to see some of the works of Phidias; but you have no ambition to assemble, in order to understand and look at those works which may be seen without travelling at all. Will you never understand what you are, nor why you were brought into the world; nor, finally, what that is which you have now an opportunity to view and contemplate?" And in another place he says, "If we were wise, what have we else to do, both in public and private, but to praise and celebrate the Deity, and to return our thanks to him? Ought we not while we are digging, ploughing, and eating, to sing to God this hymn, Great is the Lord who has provided us with these necessaries of life?"

As for you, I would have you to be sensible of the honour and dignity of your original state; and to be deeply impressed with the indignity and disgrace of your nature, now fallen and vitiated. And dwell particularly upon the contemplation of it. Suffer not the great honour and dignity of the human race, which is to know the eternal and invisible God, to acknowledge him, love him, and

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worship him, to decay and die away within you. This, alas! is the way of the far greater part of the world; but do you live in continual remembrance of your original, and assert your claim to heaven, as being originally from it and soon to return to it again.

LECTURE XIII.

Of Providence.

THE doctrines we have been handling are the great supports of faith, piety, and the whole of religion; wherefore it is most just, that the zeal and care of the scholars should concur with that of their teachers, to have them well secured in the mind and affections; for, "a weak foundation," as the lawyers observe, "is the ruin of their work." There are two principal pillars, and as it were the Jachin and Boaz of the living temples of God, which the apostle to the Hebrews lays down in these words: ***He that cometh to God*** (under which expression is comprehended every devout affection and every act of religious worship) ***must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.***

That God is, implies not only that he is eternal and self-existent, but also that he is to all other beings the spring and fountain of what they are and what they have, and consequently that he is the wise and powerful Creator of angels and men, and even of the whole universe. This is the first particular, that God is. The second, that ***he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,*** ascertains the providence and government of God, exemplified in its most eminent effect with regard to mankind; for providence extends further than this, and comprehends in it a constant preservation and support of all things visible and invisible, whether in heaven or earth, and the sovereign government and disposal of them. Mechanics, when they have completed houses, ships, and other works, they have been engaged in, leave them to take their fate in the world, and, for the most part, give themselves no further trouble about the accidents that may befall them; but the supreme Architect and wise Creator never forsakes the work of his hands, but keeps his arms continually about it to preserve

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it; sits at the helm to rule and govern it; is himself in every part of it, and fills the whole with his presence. So great a fabric could not possibly stand without some guardian and ruler; nor can this be any other than the Creator himself; for who can pay a greater regard to it, support it more effectually, or govern it with greater wisdom, than he who made it? Nothing can be more perfect than God, therefore, it is necessary the world should be governed by him," says Cicero; and, "They who take away providence, though they acknowledge God in words, in fact deny him."

If we believe that all things were produced out of nothing, the consequence is, that by the same powerful hand that created them, they must be preserved and supported to keep them from falling back into their primitive nothing. It must be also owned, that by the same powerful hand the regular motions of the stars, the contexture of the elementary world, the various kinds of creatures and the uninterrupted succession of their generations, are continued and preserved. Nor is divine providence to be confined within the heavens, or, in the lower world, restrained to the care of generals, in opposition to individuals; although the Peripatetic school inclined too much to this opinion, and, even the master of that school Aristotle himself, in his often quoted book, if it really be his, De-Mundo. For, that providence extends to all things in this lower globe, from the highest to the lowest, and comprehends within its sphere particular as well as general things, the least as well as the greatest, is confirmed, not only by the doctrine of the sacred scripture, but also by the testimony of all sound philosophy.

1. Therefore, in maintaining the doctrine of Providence, we affirm, first, that the eternal Mind has an absolute and perfect knowledge of all things in general, and every single one in particular. Nor does he see only those that are actually present, as they appear in their order upon the stage of the world, but, at one view, comprehends all that are past as well as all that are to come, as if they were actually present before him. This the ancient philosopher Thales is said to have asserted expressly, even with regard to the hidden motions and most secret thoughts of the human mind; for, being asked, if any one that does

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evil can conceal it from God? he answered, "No, not even his evil thoughts." "Nothing is left unprovided for," says St. Basil, "nothing is overlooked by God. His watchful eye sees all things. He is present every where to give salvation to all." Epictetus has also the same divine thoughts upon this subject.

And here, were any one to reflect seriously on the vast number of affairs that are constantly in agitation in one province or even in one city, the many political schemes and projects, the multiplicity of law matters, the still greater number of family affairs, and all the particulars comprehended under so many general heads, he would be amazed and overpowered with the thoughts of a knowledge so incomprehensibly extensive. This was the very thought which excited the divine psalmist's admiration, and made him cry out with wonder and astonishment, *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high; I cannot attain unto it.*

2. He not only knows all things and takes notice of them, but he also rules and governs them. *He hath done whatsoever he pleased in the heavens and the earth,* says the psalmist. *He worketh all things,* says the apostle, *according to the counsel of his own will.* He does all things according to his pleasure, but that pleasure is influenced by his reason; all things absolutely, but yet all things with the greatest justice, sanctity, and prudence.

He views and governs the actions of man in a particular manner. He hath given him a law. He hath proposed rewards, and annexed punishments to enforce it, and engage man's obedience. And having discovered, as it were, an extraordinary concern about him when he made him, as we have observed upon the words *Let us make man,* in like manner he still continues to maintain an uncommon good will towards him, and, so to speak, an anxious concern about him; so that one of the ancients most justly called man, "God's favourite creature." And he spoke much to the purpose, who said, "God is neither a lover of horses nor of birds, but of mankind." With regard to the justice of the supreme government of providence, we meet with a great deal even in the ancient poets.

"O father Jove," says Æschylus, "thou reignest in heaven, thou takest notice of the rash and wicked actions of

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gods and men. Thy care even extends to the wild beasts; thou observest the wrongs done them, and securest their privileges."

"Though justice," says Euripides, "comes late, it is still justice; it lies hid as it were in ambush, till it finds an opportunity to inflict due punishment upon the wicked man."

"Dost thou think," says Æchylus, "to get the better of the divine knowledge, and that justice stands at a distance from the human race? She is near at hand, and sees without being seen; she knows who ought to be punished; but when she will suddenly fall upon the wicked, that thou knowest not."

"The weight of justice," says the same author in another place, "falls upon some quickly in the day time; it lies in wait for some sins till the twilight. The longer it is delayed, the severer the punishment; accordingly, some are consigned to eternal night."

There are two difficulties, however, on this head, which are not easily solved; first, the success that commonly attends the wicked in this world, and the evil to which the good are exposed. On this subject, even the philosophers, pleading the cause of God, (which, if we take their word, they thought a matter of no great difficulty) advanced a great many things. Seneca tells us, "There is a settled friendship, nay, a near relation and similitude between God and good men; he is even their father, but, in their education, he inures them to hardships. When therefore you see them struggling with difficulties, sweating and employed in uphill work; while the wicked, on the other hand, are in high spirits and swim in pleasures; consider, that we are pleased with modesty in our children and forwardness in our slaves: the former we keep under by severe discipline, while we encourage impudence in the latter. Be persuaded that God takes the same method. He does not pamper the good man with delicious fare, but tries him; he accustoms him to hardships, and," which is a wonderful expression in a heathen, "prepares him for himself." And in another place he says, "Those luxurious persons whom he seems to indulge and to spare, he reserves for evils to come. For you are mistaken if you think any one excepted. The man who has been long spared will at last have his portion of

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misery; and he that seems to have been dismissed is only delayed for a time," and a vast deal more to this purpose. The same sort of sentiments we meet with in Plutarch. "God takes the same method," says he, "with good men, that teachers do with their scholars, when they exact more than ordinary of those children of whom they have the greatest hopes." And it is a noble thought which we meet with in the same author: "If he who transgresses in the morning," says he, "is punished in the evening, you will not say that in this case, justice is slow; but to God, one or even several ages are but as one day." How near is this to St. Peter's saying on the same subject! 2 Pet. iii. 8.

The other point upon this subject, which perplexes men fond of controversy and is perplexed by them, is, how to reconcile human liberty with divine providence, which we have taken notice of before. But, to both these difficulties and to all others that may occur upon the subject, I would oppose the saying of St. Augustine: "Let us grant that God can do some things which we cannot understand."

What a melancholy thing it would be to live in a world where anarchy reigned! It would certainly be a woful situation to all, but more especially to the best and most inoffensive part of mankind. It would have been no great privilege to have been born into a world without God and without providence; for if there were no supreme Ruler of the world, then undoubtedly the wickedness of men would reign without any curb or impediment, and the great and powerful would unavoidably devour the weak and helpless, "as the great fishes often eat up the small, and the hawk makes havoc among the weaker birds."

It may be objected, that this frequently happens even in the present world, as appears from the prophecies of Habakkuk, i. 15; but the prophet immediately after asserts, that there is a supreme power which holds the reins in the midst of these irregularities; and though they are sometimes permitted, yet there is a determinate time appointed for setting all things to rights again, which the just man expects, and till it comes *lives by faith*.

Some passages of Ariston's Iambics, are admirable to this purpose. "*A*. Be patient; for God uses to support

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worthy men, such as you are, in a remarkable manner. And unless those who act in a becoming manner are to receive some great reward, to what purpose is it, pray, to cultivate piety any longer? *B.* I wish that may be the case; but I too often see those who conform themselves to the rules of piety and virtue, oppressed by calamity; while those who mind nothing but what they are prompted to by private interest and profit, thrive and flourish much better than we. *A.* For the present it is so indeed; but it becomes us to look a great way forward, and wait till the world has completed its full revolution; for it is by no means true, that this life is entirely under the dominion of blind chance or fortune; though many entertain this wicked notion, and the corrupt part of mankind, from this consideration, encourage themselves in immorality: but the virtues of the good will meet with a proper reward, and the wicked will be punished for their crimes; for nothing happens without the will of heaven."

What the poets sometimes advance concerning a supreme fate which governs all things, they often ascribe to God; though now and then they forget themselves, and subject even the supreme Being to their fate, as the Stoic philosophers did also. But possibly they both had a sound meaning, though it was couched under words that sound a little harsh; and this meaning now and then breaks forth, particularly when they celebrate God for disposing all things, by an eternal law, according to his own good pleasure, and thereby make him the supreme and universal Governor, subject to no other, but, in some respect, to himself or to his decrees: which, if you understand them in a sound sense, is all that they can mean by their τὸ σοφώτατον and their τὸ ἀμετάβλητον. The same judgment is to be passed with regard to what we find said about fortune; for either that word signifies nothing at all, or you must understand by it the supreme Mind, freely disposing of all things. And this is very clearly attested by the following excellent verses of Menander; "Cease to improve your minds, for the mind of man is nothing at all. The government of all things is solely in the hands of fortune. Whether this fortune be a mind, or the spirit of God, or whatever else it is, it carries all before it. Human prudence is but a vapour, a mere

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trifle." We have also a great many proofs, that, in the opinion of the old poets, fate and fortune were precisely the same; one instance whereof we meet with in the following passage; "Fortune and fate, Pericles, are the givers of all that man enjoys."

And, instead of the terms fate and fortune, they sometimes used the word necessity. But all these were but other names, though ill chosen, for providence. Euripides, having said a great deal concerning fate or necessity, at last resolves the whole into this; "Jupiter executes with thee all he had decreed before." And Homer's words are very remarkable. "Jupiter," says he, "increases or diminishes the valour of men, as he thinks proper; for he is the most powerful of all." And in another place; "Jove from Olympus distributes happiness to good and bad men in general and every one in particular, as he himself thinks proper."

Let us therefore look upon God as our Father, and venture to trust him with our all. Let us ask and beg of him what we want, and look for supplies from no other quarter. This the indulgent father in Terence desired; and much more our heavenly Father. And surely every thing is better conducted by a dutiful love and confidence, than by an ignoble and servile fear; and we are very injurious both to him and ourselves, when we think not, that all things on his part are managed with the greatest goodness and bounty. It is a true test of religion and obedience, when with honourable thoughts and a firm confidence in our Father, we absolutely depend upon him and serve him from a principle of love. "Be not," says Augustine, "a froward boy in the house of the best of fathers, loving him when he is fond of thee, and hating him when he gives thee chastisement; as if in both cases, he did not intend to provide an inheritance for thee." If we suppose this Providence to be the wisest and the best, it is necessary that in every instance our wills should be perfectly submissive to its designs; otherwise we prefer our own pleasure to the will of heaven, which appears very unnatural. St. Augustine on the expression, *upright in heart*, which we frequently meet with in the psalms, makes an excellent observation. "If you cheerfully embrace," says he, "the divine will in some things, but in

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others would rather prefer your own, you are crooked in heart, and would not have your crooked inclinations conformed to his upright intentions; but, on the contrary, would bend his upright will to yours."

LECTURE XIV.

Of Christ the Saviour.

It is acknowledged, that the publication of the gospel is exceeding agreeable, and perfectly answers its original name, which signifies good tidings. How much sweeter is this joyful news, than the most ravishing and delightful concerts of music! Nay, these are the best tidings that were ever heard in any age of the world. O happy shepherds, to whom this news was sent down from heaven! Ye, to be sure, though watching in the fields, exposed to the severe cold of the night, were, in this, more happy than kings that slept at their ease in gilded beds; that the wonderful nativity of the supreme King, begotten from eternity, that nativity which brought salvation to the whole world, was first communicated to you, and just at the time it happened. *Behold*, says the angel, *I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day a Saviour.* And immediately a great company of the heavenly host joined the angel, and in your hearing sung *Glory to God in the highest.* And indeed then, in the strictest truth, "A most extraordinary child was sent down from the lofty heavens," Whence also his name was sent down along with him; *His name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.* "O sweet name of Jesus," says St. Bernard, "honey in the mouth, melody in the ears, and healing to the heart." This is the Saviour, who, though we were so miserable and so justly miserable, yet would not suffer us to perish. Nor did he only put on our nature, but also our sins, that is, in a legal sense, our guilt being transferred to him. Whence we not only read, that *the Word was made flesh*, but also, that *he was made sin for us, who knew no sin;* and even that he was *made a curse*, that from him an eternal blessing and felicity might be derived to us. The spotless Lamb of God bore our sins,

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that were devolved upon him: by thus bearing them, he destroyed them; and by dying for them, gained a complete victory over death. And how wonderful is the gradation of the blessings he procured for us! He not only delivered us from a prison and death, but presents us with a kingdom; according to that declaration of the psalmist, *Who redeemeth thee from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.*

I believe there are none so stupid or insensible, as to refuse that these tidings are very agreeable and pleasing to the ear; but we may, not without some reason, suspect of the greatest part of nominal Christians, who commonly receive these truths with great applause, that it may be said to them, without any injustice, what is all this to you? These privileges are truly great and manifold, and directed alike to all to whom they are preached, unless they reject them and shut the door against happiness offering to come in. And this is not only the case of a great part of mankind, but they also impose upon themselves by false hopes, as if it were enough to hear of these great blessings, and dream themselves happy because these sounds have reached their ears. But, O unhappy men, what will all these immense riches signify to you, I must indeed say, if you are not allowed to use them, or rather, if you know not how to avail yourselves of them? I therefore earnestly wish that these words of the gospel were well fixed in your minds; *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.* John, i. 10. 12. *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;* and without him there is nothing but emptiness, because *in him all fulness dwells.* But what advantage can it be to us to hear these riches of our Jesus spoken of at great length and to excellent purpose, or even to speak of them ourselves, if, all the while, we talk of them as a good foreign to us, and in which we have no concern, because our hearts are not yet open to receive him? What, pray, would the most accurate description of the Fortunate Islands, as they are called, or all the wealth of the Indies and the New World with its golden mines, signify to a

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poor man, half naked, struggling with all the rigours of cold and hunger? Should one in these circumstances, I say, hear or read of these immense treasures, or should any one describe them to him in the most striking manner, either by word of mouth or with the advantage of an accurate pen, can it be doubted, but that this empty display of riches, this phantom of wealth and affluence, would make his sense of want and misery the more intolerable; unless it be supposed, that despair had already reduced him to a state of insensibility? What further enhances the misery of those who hear of this treasure and think it of no purpose, is this, that there is no one of them who is not miserable by choice, and a beggar in the midst of the greatest wealth; and not only miserable by choice, but obstinately so, from an invincible and distracted fondness for the immediate causes of his misery; for "who but a downright madman would reject such golden offers?"

To give a brief and plain state of the case—to those who sincerely and with all their hearts receive him, Christ is all things; to those who receive him not, nothing; for how can any good, however suitable or extensive, be actually enjoyed, or indeed any such enjoyment conceived, without some kind of union between that good and the person supposed to stand in need of it? *Behold*, says the psalmist, *all those that are far from thee, shall perish.* To be united to God is the great and the only good of mankind; and the only means of this union is Jesus. In whatever sense you take it, he ought truly to be called the union of unions; who, that he might with the greater consistency and the more closely unite our souls to God, did not disdain to unite himself to a human body.

The great business of our life, therefore, is this acceptance of Christ, and this inseparable union with him which we are now recommending. Thrice happy, and more than thrice happy, are they who are joined with him in this undivided union, which no complaints, nor even the day of death can dissolve! Nay, the last day is happy above all other days for this very reason, that it fully and finally completes this union, and is so far from dissolving it, that it renders it absolutely perfect and everlasting.

But that it may be coeval with eternity and last for ever, it is absolutely necessary that this union should have

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its beginning in this short and fleeting life. And pray, what hinders those of us that have not entered into this union before, to enter into it without delay; seeing the bountiful Jesus not only rejects none that come unto him, but also offers himself to all that do not wilfully reject him, and, standing at the door, earnestly begs to be admitted? O why do not these *everlasting doors open, that the King of glory may enter* and reign within us? Nay, though he were to be sought in a far country and with great labour, why should we delay, and what unhappy chains detain us? Why do we not, after shaking them all off and even ourselves, go as it were out of ourselves, and seek him incessantly till we find him? Then, rejoicing over him, say with the heavenly spouse, *I held him, and would not let him go;* and further add, with the same spouse, that blessed expression, *My beloved is mine, and I am his.* And indeed this interest is always reciprocal. No man truly receives Jesus, who does not at the same time deliver up himself wholly to him. Among all the advantages we pursue, there is nothing comparable to this exchange. Our gain is immense from both; not only from the acceptance of him, but also from surrendering ourselves to him. So long as this is delayed, we are the most abject slaves. When one has delivered himself up to Christ, then, and then only, he is truly free and becomes master of himself. Why should we wander about to no purpose? To him let us turn our eyes, on him fix our thoughts, that he who is ours by the donation of the Father and his own free gift, may be ours by a cheerful and joyous acceptance. As St. Bernard says on these words of the prophet, *Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given,* "Let us therefore make use of what is ours, for our own advantage." So then let him be ours by possession and use, and let us be his for ever, never forgetting how dearly he has bought us.

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LECTURE XV.

Of Regeneration.

THE Platonists divide the world into two, the sensible and the intellectual world. They imagine the one to be the type of the other, and that sensible and spiritual things are stamped, as it were, with the same stamp or seal. These sentiments are not unlike the notions which the masters of the cabalistical doctrine among the Jews held concerning God's sephiroth and seal, wherewith, according to them, all the worlds and every thing in them are stamped or sealed. And these are probably near akin to what Lord Bacon of Verulam calls his "Parallela signacula" and "Symbolizantes schematismi." According to this hypothesis, these parables and metaphors, which are often taken from natural things to illustrate such as are divine, will not be similitudes taken entirely at pleasure, but are often, in a great measure, founded in nature and the things themselves. Be this as it may, that great change which happens in the souls of men by a real and effectual conversion to God, is illustrated in the holy scriptures by several remarkable changes, both natural and civil, particularly by a deliverance from chains, prison, and slavery; by a transition from one kingdom to another, and from darkness to light; by a restoration from death to life; by a new creation; by a marriage; and by adoption and regeneration. Concerning this great change as it is represented under the last of these figures, we propose, with divine assistance, to offer a few thoughts from those words of St. John's gospel which we have already mentioned; *As many as received him, to them gave he power* or the privilege *to become the sons of God;* together with these words of our Saviour in another place of the same gospel; *Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

If indeed we consider the nature and the original of man, it is not without reason that he is called the *son of God,* according to that passage which the apostle, in his short but most weighty sermon to the Athenians, quotes from the poet Aratus, and at the same time approves of, *For we are all his offspring.* Our first parent, in St. Luke's

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gospel, is also expressly called *the son of God;* not only because he was created immediately by God without any earthly father, but also on account of the divine image that was originally impressed upon the human nature.

And this glorious title, which distinguishes man from all other corporeal beings, he has in common with the angels, who are also so called in several places of the book of Job. Job, i. 6; xxxviii. 7. It is indeed true, to use the words of St. Basil, that "every piece of workmanship bears some mark or character of the workman who made it;" for I should rather choose, in this case, to use the word mark or character, than likeness. But of man alone it is said, *Let us make him after our image.* And this distinction is not improperly expressed by the schoolmen, who say, as we have already observed, that all the other works of God are stamped with the print of his foot, but that man only of all the visible creation is honoured with the image or likeness of his face. And indeed on account of this image or resemblance it is, that he is in dignity very nearly equal to the angels, though made inferior to them. Here it is to be observed, that this inferiority is but little. *Who was made,* saith the apostle, *a little lower than the angels.* So that, with regard to his body, he is nearly related to the brute creatures, and only a little superior to them with regard to temperament and the beautiful elegance of his frame, but made out of the very same materials, the same moist and soft clay, taken from the bosom of their great and common mother; whereas, to use the words of the poet, "The soul is the breath of God, which takes its rise from heaven, and is closely united to his earthly body, like a light shut up in a dark cavern."

That divine part of the human composition derives its original from the Father of spirits, in the same manner with those ministers of fire who are not confined to corporeal vehicles; concerning whom, the oracle having acknowledged one supreme and divine Majesty, immediately subjoins, "And we angels are but a small part of God."

And with regard to this principle which excels in man, which actually constitutes the man, and on account of which he most truly deserves that name, he is a noble and

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divine animal. And whatever some fanciful and proud men may boast concerning their families, "if we consider our original, and that God was the author of the human kind, none of Adam's race can be called ignoble." But if on the other hand, we regard our woeful fall, which was the consequence of sin, we are all degenerate. We have all fallen from the highest honour into the greatest disgrace, and the deepest gulf of all sorts of misery. We have given away our liberty and greatest dignity, in exchange for the most shameful and most deplorable bondage. Instead of the sons of God, we are become the slaves of Satan; and if we now want to know to what family we belong, the apostle will tell us, that we are *children of wrath* and *sons of disobedience*.

But as the overflowing Fountain of goodness and bounty did not choose that so noble a monument of his wisdom should be entirely ruined by this dismal fall, could any one be more proper to raise it up again, or better qualified to restore men to the dignity of the sons of God, than his own eternal Son, who is the most perfect and express image of the Father? Nor does this glorious person decline the severe service. Though he was the son of his Father's love, the heir and lord of the whole universe; though he might be called the delight of his most exalted Father and of all blessed spirits, and now, with the greatest justice, the darling of the human kind; yet he left his Father's bosom, and, O wonderful condescension! became the son of man, that men might become anew the sons of God. Whence he is also called the second Adam, because he recovered all that was lost by the first.

That all who sincerely receive him might be again admitted into the embraces of the Father, and no more be called *children of wrath*, he himself submitted to the punishment due to our disobedience; and, by bearing it, removed our guilt and pacified justice. He also went into the flames of divine wrath to deliver us from them, and, by a plentiful stream of his most precious blood, quite extinguished them. He likewise took effectual care that those who were now no longer to be called *children of wrath*, should also cease to be *children of disobedience*, by pouring out upon them a plentiful effusion of his sanctifying spirit; that their hearts being thereby purged from

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all impure affections and the love of earthly things, they might, under the influence of the same good Spirit, cheerfully lead a life of sincere and universal obedience. Now it cannot be doubted, that those who are so actuated and conducted by the divine Spirit, are truly the *sons of God*. Whence that Spirit whereby they call God their Father, and with confidence apply to him as such, is called *the Spirit of adoption*.

Moreover, this wonderful restoration is often called adoption, not only to distinguish it from the natural and incomparable dignity which belongs to the only begotten Son, but also because we by no means derive this privilege from nature, but absolutely from the free donation of the Father through the mediation of his only Son. We must not, however, conclude from this, that this privilege has nothing more in it than an honourable title, or, as they call it, an external relation; for it is not only inseparably connected with a real and internal change, but with a remarkable renovation and, as it were, a transformation of all the faculties of the soul, nay, even of the whole man. You will accordingly find these words applied to this purpose, by the apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, xii. 2. And to conclude—it is with a view to convince us, that, together with the title of sons, the Spirit of God is given to believers and they are inwardly renewed thereby, that we so often in scripture meet with this regeneration which is the subject of our present discourse.

If we consider the lives of men, we shall be apt to imagine, that the generality of mankind who live in the world under the name of Christians, think it sufficient for them to be called by this name, and dream of nothing further. The common sort of mankind hear with pleasure and delight of free remission of sins, imputed righteousness, of the dignity of the sons of God, and the eternal inheritance annexed to that dignity; but when they are told that repentance, a new heart, and a new life, contempt of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, fasting and prayer, are absolutely necessary for a Christian—*these are hard sayings; who can bear them?* Though at the same time it must be said, that they who do not regard these necessary duties will have no share in the reward annexed to them.

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There are many things which distinguish this divine adoption from that which obtains among men.

1. The former is not an expedient to supply the want of children, which is commonly the case among men; for God has his only begotten Son, who is incomparably preferable to all the rest taken together, who is immortal as his father; and though from a principle of wonderful humility he condescended to become mortal and even to die, yet he rose again from the dead, and liveth for ever. From him is derived all that felicity which our heavenly Father is pleased to confer upon us out of his mere grace and bounty, through the merits and mediation of his dear Son. And is there any one, on whom this felicity is bestowed, who will not freely acknowledge himself to be quite unworthy of so great an honour? Yet such honour has the eternal and incomprehensible love of God condescended to bestow on us, who are quite unworthy and undeserving. And in this also the divine adoption differs from that which is customary among men, who generally choose the most deserving they can meet with; but all those whom God makes choice of are unworthy, and some even are remarkably so.

2. Men generally adopt but one each, or, at most, a few; but divine adoption admits into the heavenly family a most numerous host, extending even unto myriads, that Jesus, who is the head of the family, *may be the first-born among many brethren.*

3. They are all heirs. Whence it is said, in another place, *that he might bring many sons unto glory.* Nor is the inheritance of any individual in the least diminished in consequence of so vast a multitude of heirs; for it is an inheritance in light, and every one has the whole of it. Nor do the children come into the possession of this inheritance by the death of the Father, but every one when he dies himself; for the Father is immortal, and, according to the apostle, *the* only one that has immortality, that is, in an absolute, primary, and independent sense. Nay, he himself is the eternal inheritance of his sons, and death alone brings them into his presence, and admits them into the full enjoyment of him.

4. This Divine adoption is not a matter of mere external honour, nor simply the bestowing of riches and an inheritance; but it is always attended with a real internal

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change of the man himself to a being quite different from what he was before; which is also recorded in sacred scripture concerning Saul, when he was anointed king; but this, human adoption can by no means perform. This last, in the choice of a proper object, justly pays regard to merit; but though the richest and even the best of men may clothe richly the person whom he has thought proper to adopt, and get him instructed in the best principles and rules of conduct, yet he cannot effectually divest him of his innate dispositions or those manners that have become natural by custom; he cannot form his mind to noble actions, nor plant within him the principles of fortitude and virtue. But he who formed the heart of man can reform it at his pleasure; and this he actually does. Whenever he admits a person into his royal family, he at the same time endows him with royal and divine dispositions. And, therefore, if he honours any person with his love, that person thereby becomes deserving; because, if he were not so before, he makes him so. He stamps his own image upon him in true and lively colours; and, as he is holy himself, he makes him holy likewise. Hence it is, that this heavenly adoption is no less properly, truly, or frequently, in the sacred scriptures, called regeneration. And though a Jew, and a celebrated doctor of the Jewish law, excepted against this doctrine, when it was proposed to him under this name, yet, neither all of that nation, nor even the Gentile philosophers, were quite unacquainted with it. Rabbi Israel calls the proselytes new-born Jews. And those passages which we frequently meet with concerning the seed of Abraham, and in the Prophets concerning the numerous converts that were to be made to the church, are, by their Rabbins and the Chaldee paraphrase, applied to this spiritual generation, which they believed would remarkably take place in the days of the Messiah; particularly those two passages in the Psalms, in one whereof the spiritual sons of the church are compared to the drops of the morning dew—Psalm xlv. 16; cx. 3—not only on account of its celestial purity, but also with regard to the vast multitude of them. Some of these doctors also observe, that the number of proselytes would be so great in the days of the Messiah, that the church, omitting the ceremony of circumcision, would receive

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them into its bosom and initiate them by ablution or baptism. Concerning this renovation of the mind, Philo Judæus says expressly, "God, who is unbegotten himself and begets all things, sows this seed, as it were, with his own hand." Hierocles and other Pythagorean philosophers treat also of this moral and mystical regeneration; and under this very name Plutarch also makes mention of it, and defines it to be "the mortification of irrational and irregular appetites." And Seneca's words relative to this subject are, "The families of the arts and sciences are the most noble. Choose into which of them you will be adopted, for by this means we may be born according to our own choice; nor will you be adopted into the name only, but also into the goods of the family."

Is not also the common custom that prevailed among the ancients, of honouring their heroes, and those men who were remarkable for exalted virtue, with the title of sons of God, a plain allusion to this adoption we have under our consideration? And what we have observed on the philosophers, who acknowledged this moral or metaphorical regeneration, is so very true that it gave a handle to the fictions of those ancient heretics, who evaded the whole doctrine of faith of the last resurrection by putting this figurative sense upon it. As to what the Roman philosopher observes, that we may be born in this manner at our own pleasure or discretion, though certainly it is not without our consent, yet it does not altogether nor principally depend upon us. Our sacred and apostolic doctrine presents us with much more just and pure notions on this subject, when it teaches us, that *of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.* This is also represented in express terms in those words of the gospel, which immediately follow the passage we mentioned at the beginning of this discourse: *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* And, with great propriety, there is immediately added, another generation still more wonderful and mysterious, which is the principle and source of this renovation of ours; the Word was made flesh; for to this end God was pleased to clothe himself with our flesh, that he might put his Spirit within us, whereby we, though carnal in consequence of the corruption of our nature, might be born

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again into a new, spiritual, and divine life. The Holy Ghost, by overshadowing the blessed virgin, was in a very particular manner the author of the human nature of the Son of God; and to the virtue and divine power of the same Spirit, all the adopted children of the Deity owe their new birth. And as creation goes sometimes under the name of generation—for instance, in the words of Moses, *Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten the God that formed thee*—that book also of the Bible, which from the first word of it is called Bereshith, is by the Greeks named *Genesis*, and in the oldest copy of the Septuagint *the* Generation of the World; and, in the beginning of it Moses, speaking of the creation of the world, says, *These are the generations of the heaven and the earth.* So, on the other hand, this spiritual generation is called creation, and with an additional epithet the new creation. It has also for its author the same powerful Spirit of God, who of old sat upon the face of the waters as a bird upon its young, or, as St. Basil renders it, hatched: so also in conversion the same Spirit rests upon our uninformed minds, that are lifeless, unprepared, and nothing at all but emptiness and obscurity; and out of this darkness brings forth light, which was the first and most beautiful ornament of the universe. To which the apostle also alludes in his second epistle to the Corinthians, iv. 6.

The resurrection of the dead is also the peculiar work of this enlivening Spirit of God; and to him the apostle Peter expressly ascribes the resurrection of Christ. *For Christ also*, says he, *hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* And here, again, there is a mutual exchange of names; for, in the gospel according to Matthew, the resurrection of the dead is called the regeneration. *Verily, I say unto you*, says our Lord, *that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye shall sit also upon twelve thrones.* Here, *in the regeneration* must be connected with the following words, and by no means with those that go before. And that this was a common method of speaking among the Jews, appears from Josephus. "To those," says he, "whose fate it is to die for observing the law, God

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has given the privileges of being born again and enjoying a more happy life, so that they are gainers by the exchange." In like manner Philo saith, "We shall hasten to the regeneration after death." On the other hand, it is very well known, that this spiritual regeneration we are speaking of is often in scripture called the resurrection.

Of this resurrection, the word of the gospel is, as it were, the trumpet; and, at the same time, the immortal seed of this new birth, and therefore of immortality itself. Thus it is represented by the apostle Peter, 1 Pet. i. 23; and by the apostle James, who expressly tells us, that *he hath begotten us with the word of truth.* Now the enlivening virtue and plastic power of this word is derived from the Holy Ghost, who is the true spring and fountain of this new life. Nor are the most extended powers of the human mind, or the strength of its understanding, any more able to restore this life within it, even upon hearing the glad tidings of the gospel, than it was capable of producing itself at first, or of being the author of its own being, or, after death, of restoring itself to life.

To this exalted dignity are admitted the humble, the poor, the obscure, the ignorant, barbarians, slaves, sinners, whom the world looks upon as nothing and holds in the greatest contempt. Of these nothing is required but true and sincere faith; no learning, nor noble extract, nor any submission to the Mosaic law; but upon every man, of whatever rank or condition, who believes this word, he in return bestows this dignity, *that they should become the sons of God*, that is, that what Christ was by nature, they should become by grace. Now what is more sublime and exalted than this honour, that those who were formerly children of Satan and heirs of hell, should by faith alone be made the *sons of God, brethren of Christ*, and *joint heirs* of the heavenly kingdom? If the sacred fire of the Romans happened at any time to be extinguished, it could only be lighted again at the rays of the sun. The life of souls is a sacred flame of divine love. This flame, as we are now born into the froward race of fallen mankind, is, alas! but too truly and unhappily extinguished; and is by no means to be kindled again, but by the enlivening light and heat of the Sun of Righteousness, who is most auspiciously risen upon us.

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LECTURE XVI.

Of Regeneration.

THE great corruption of mankind and their innate disposition to every sort of wickedness, even the doctors of the heathen nations, that is, their philosophers and theologers, and their poets also, were sensible of, and acknowledged; though they were quite ignorant of the sources from which this calamity was derived. They all own, that "it is natural to man to sin." Even your favourite philosopher Asistotle, who prevails in the schools, declares, that we are "strongly inclined to vice;" and speaking of the charms and allurements of forbidden pleasures, he observes, that mankind by nature "is easily caught in these snares." The Roman philosopher takes notice, that "the way to vice is not only a descent, but a downright precipice;" and the comic poet, that "mankind has always been, in every respect, a deceitful subtle creature." The satirist Juvenal likewise observes, that "we are all easily prevailed on to imitate things that are in their nature wicked and disgraceful;" and the lyric poet Horace, that "the human race, bold to attempt the greatest dangers, rushes with impetuosity upon forbidden crimes."

All the wise men among the heathens exerted their utmost to remedy this evil by precepts and institutions of philosophy, but to very little purpose. They could not, by all their arts and all their precepts, make others better; nay, with regard to most of them, we may say, nor even themselves. But, "When there was no wisdom in the earth," says Lactantius, "that blessed doctor was sent down from Heaven, who is the way, the truth, and the life; and, by an almighty power, effected what all others had attempted in vain."

It is not at all to be doubted, but the end proposed by philosophy was to renew and to reform mankind, and to reduce the course of their lives to a conformity with the precepts of wisdom and virtue. Whence the common definition given of philosophy is, that it is the rule of life, and the art or science of living uprightly. To this purpose Seneca says, "Philosophy is the law of living honestly

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and uprightly." True religion, to be sure, has the same tendency, but it promotes its end with much greater force and better success; because its principles are much more exalted, its precepts and instructions are of greater purity, and it is besides attended with a divine power, whereby it makes its way into the hearts of men, and purifies them with the greatest force and efficacy, and yet, at the same time, with the most wonderful pleasure and delight. And this is the regeneration of which we are speaking, and whereof we have already observed, that philosophy acknowledged it even under the same name. But that it affected it, we absolutely deny. Now it is evident from the very name, that we are to understand by it an inward change, and that a very remarkable one. And since God is called the author and source of this change, whatever the philosophers may have disputed, concerning the origin of moral virtue, we are by no means to doubt, but that this sacred and divine change upon the heart of man is produced by an influence truly divine. And this was even Plato's opinion concerning virtue; nor do I imagine you are unacquainted with it. The same philosopher, and several others besides him, expressly asserted, that virtue was a kind of image or likeness of God; nay, that it was the effect of inspiration, and partook, in some respect, of a kind of divine nature. "No mind can be rightly disposed without divine influence," says Seneca. And it was the saying of the Pythagorean philosophers, that "the end of man is to be made like to God." "This mind," says Trismegistus, "is God in man, and therefore, some of the number of men are gods;" and a little further on, "In whatever souls the mind presides, it enlightens them with its own brightness, opposing their immoralities and mad inclinations; just as a learned physician inflicts pain upon the body of his patient, by burning and cutting it, in order to recover it to health, in the same manner the mind afflicts a voluptuous soul, that it may pull up pleasure by the very roots; for all diseases of the soul proceed from it. Impiety is the severest distemper of the soul."

What wonder is it then if these very thoughts are expressed in the more divine oracles of the sacred scriptures more fully, and with greater clearness? And this conformation of the human mind to the divine nature, is com-

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monly represented therein, as the great business and the end of all religion.

What was more frequently inculcated upon the ancient church of the Jews, than these words, *Be ye holy for I am holy?* And that the same ambition is recommended to Christians appears from the first sermon we meet with in the gospel of our Lord and Saviour, who came down to this earth, that he might restore the divine image upon men. *Be merciful,* says he, *as your Father, who is in heaven, is merciful;* and, according to Luke, *Be perfect, as your Father is perfect;* and again, *Blessed are the pure in heart.* And indeed this is the true beauty of the heart, and its true nobility; but vice introduces degeneracy and deformity also.

Now the more the mind disengages and withdraws itself from matters that pollutes it, that is, from the body it inhabits, the purer and more divine it constantly becomes; because it attains to a greater resemblance with the Father of spirits, and, as the apostle Peter expresses it, *partakes* more fully *of the divine nature.* Hence it is that the apostle Paul warns us at so great length and in such strong terms against *living after the flesh,* as the very death of the soul and directly opposite to the renewed nature of a Christian. He that is born of God is endued with a greatness of soul, that makes him easily despise and consider as nothing those things which he prized at a very high rate before. He considers heaven as his country, even while he lives as a stranger on this earth. He aspires at the highest objects, and, "flying up towards heaven, with soaring wings, looks down with contempt upon the earth."

And yet, with all this sublimity of mind, he joins the deepest humility. But all the allurements of sin, though they continue to have the same appearance they had before, and possibly throw themselves in his way, as the very same that were formerly dear to him, he will reject with indignation, and give them the same answer that St. Ambrose tells us was given by a young convert to his mistress, with whom he had formerly lived in great familiarity; "Though you may be the same, I am not the same I was before."

Lactantius elegantly sets forth the wonderful power of

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religion in this respect. "Give me," says he, "a man that is passionate, a slanderer, one that is headstrong and unmanageable; with a very few of the words of God I will make him as quiet as a lamb. Give me a covetous, avaricious, or close-handed person; I will presently make him liberal, and oblige him to give away his money in large quantities with his own hands. Give me one that is afraid of pain or of death; he shall, in a very little time, despise crosses, flames, and even Phalaris's bull. Show me a lustful person, an adulterer, a complete debauchee; you shall presently see him sober, chaste, and temperate." So great is the power of divine wisdom, that, as soon as it is infused into the human breast, it presently expels folly, which is the source and fountain of sin, and so changes the whole man, so refines, and, as it were, renews him, that you would not know him to be the same. It is prophesied of the days of the Messiah, that the *wolf and the lamb shall dwell together, and the leopard lie down with the kid.* The gospel has a wonderful effect in softening even the roughest dispositions, and "there is none so wild, but he may be tamed, if he will but patiently give attention to this wholesome doctrine."

Now whether you call this revovation or change of the mind repentance or divine love, it makes no difference; for all these, and indeed all the Christian graces in general, are, at bottom, one and the same, and taken together constitute what we may call the health and vigour of the mind; the term under which Aristo of Chios comprehended all the moral virtues. The apostle Paul, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, vi. 17, describes these adopted children of God by their repentance: in the Epistle to the Romans, they are characterized by their love, viii. 28; and in the passage of St. John's gospel we have mentioned already, by their faith, i. 12. But whatever name it is conveyed by, the change itself is effected by the right hand of the Most High. As to the manner of this divine operation, to raise many disputes about it and make many curious disquisitions with regard to it, would be not only quite needless, but even absurd. Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, xi. 5, gives some grave admonitions with regard to the secret processes of nature in forming the child in the womb, to convince us of our blindness

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with respect to the other works of God: how much more hidden and intricate, and even past our finding out, is this regeneration which is purely spiritual! This is what our Saviour also teaches us, when he compares this new birth to the unconfined and unknown turnings and revolutions of the wind; a similitude which Solomon had lightly touched before, in that passage of the Ecclesiastes to which we just now alluded. O that we felt within ourselves this blessed change, though we should remain ignorant with regard to the manner of it; since we are sufficiently apprized of one thing, which it is greatly our interest frequently and seriously to reflect upon, *Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* This spiritual progeny is also compared to the dew, the generation whereof is hidden and undiscovered. *Hath the rain a father, and who hath begotten the drops of the dew?* Good men are also called *children of light*, and *light in the Lord.* But it is from *the Father of lights* himself and from his only begotten Son, that these stars, for this title of the angels may without injustice be applied to them, derive all the light they enjoy. Now the nature of light is very intricate, and the emanation and the manner of its production is yet a secret even to the most sharp sighted of those who have made nature their study, and no satisfactory theory of it has yet appeared. But whatever it is, it was produced by that first and powerful word of eternal uncreated Light, *Let there be light.* By the same powerful word of the almighty Father, there immediately springs up in the mind which was formerly quite involved in the darkness of ignorance and error, a divine and immortal light, which is *the life of men* and, in effect, the true regeneration. And because this is the most effectual means of purifying the soul, it is ascribed to water and to the Spirit; for this illumination of the Holy Ghost is indeed the inward baptism of the Spirit; but in the primitive times of Christianity, the baptism of water, on account of the supposed concurrence of the Spirit, was commonly called the illumination, and the solemn seasons appointed for the celebration of this mystery the days of illumination or light. And in the very same manner the baptism of the Holy Ghost is by John the Baptist called the *baptism of fire*, on account of the wonderful influence it has in

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illuminating and purifying the soul. It is certainly a celestial fire, quite invisible to our eyes, and of such a nature, that the secret communications of it to our souls cannot be investigated. But the sum of all is what follows—

It seemed good to infinite goodness and wisdom, to form a noble piece of coin out of clay, and to stamp His own image upon it, with this inscription, "the earthly son of God." This is what we call man. But, alas! how soon did this piece of coin fall back to clay again, and thereby lost that true image, and had the inscription shamefully blotted out! From that time, man, who was formerly a divine creature and an angel clothed with flesh, became entirely fleshly and, in reality, a brute. The soul, that noble and celestial inhabitant of his earthly body, became now quite immersed in matter, and, as it were, entirely converted into flesh, as if it had drunk of the river Lethe; or, like the son of an illustrious family, carried away in infancy to a far country, it is quite ignorant of its present misery or the liberty and felicity it has lost, becomes an abject slave, degraded to the vilest employments, which it naturally and with pleasure performs; because having lost all sense of its native excellency and dignity, and forgotten its heavenly original, it now relishes nothing but earthly things, and, catching at present advantages, disregards eternal enjoyments, as altogether unknown or removed quite out of sight. But if in any particular soul, either from some spark of its native excellency still remaining alive or any indistinct report that reaches it, some desires or emotions towards the recovery of its native liberty should arise, yet, as it has no sufficient strength of its own, nor finds any way open that can lead to so great a blessing, these ineffectual wishes come to nothing; and the unhappy soul having lost its hopes, languishes in its chains, and is at least quite stupified.

Philosophy, as we have already observed, perceiving that man was born to higher views than this world affords, attempted to raise him from his present dejection, secure his claim to heaven, and restore him to a conformity and likeness to God; but in vain. To redeem the sons of man, and restore them to what they had lost, it was necessary that the eternal Son of God should come down from

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heaven. Our fall was easily brought about, but our restoration was a work of the greatest difficulty, and only to be performed by the powerful hand of God. There are but few whom the exalted Father of spirits has loved, and Christ has raised up to heaven. He is the source whence the Spirit of God flows down to us. He is the fountain of that new life and sanctified nature, by which we mount towards God, whereby we overcome the world, and, in consequence thereof, are admitted into heaven. And happy indeed are those truly noble souls whose portion it is to be thus born again, to be admitted into the choirs of the holy angels, and to be clothed with those glorious robes that are whiter than snow! They will follow the Lamb wherever he goes, and he will lead them to the crystal streams, and even to the fountain of life itself.

But all those that are to be the attendants of the Lamb in those blessed pastures which are to be met with in his heavenly country, must of necessity, even while they live in this lower world, be followers of him in his humble innocence and purity. This spotless, holy, and pure Lamb of God, is the guide and shepherd of a pure and holy flock, a flock dear to God and of distinguished beauty; but "the shepherd is still more beautiful than they." But the impure goats and uncleanly hogs he beholds at a distance, and leaves them to unclean spirits, to be possessed by them at pleasure, and afterwards to be precipitated into the depth of misery; unless it be determined to deliver some of them from that shocking form, by a wonderful and divine change, and to convert them into lambs, which is effected in proper time by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Whence they are called the holy, pure, and divine sons of God; and all love to earthly things, all carnal, impure affections, are banished out of those hearts, which are, as it were, temples consecrated henceforth to God; "for the dwelling place of the Holy One must be holy also."

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LECTURE XVII.

Of true Felicity and Eternal Punishment.

O HOW insipid and unsatisfactory are all the pleasures of this earthly life which we now live, in comparison with that incomparable and altogether heavenly delight which attends the meditation and contemplation of divine things! When mortals are thus employed, they eat the bread of angels; and if there are any who do not relish the sweetness of this food, it is because the divine part of their composition is become brutish, and, forgetting its original, lies buried in earth and mud. But though the soul is reduced to these woful circumstances, it is not yet so entirely divested of itself, but it still retains some faint remains of its heavenly original and more exalted nature; insomuch that it cannot acquiesce in or be at all satisfied with those fading enjoyments wherewith it is surrounded, nor think itself happy or easy in the greatest abundance of earthly comforts. And though possibly it may not be fully sensible of what it wants, yet it perceives, not without some pain and uneasiness, that something is still wanting to make it happy. The truth is, besides that great and unknown good, even those, whom by an abuse of the term we call most happy, are in want of a great many things; for if we look narrowly into the condition of those who are arrived at the highest pitch of earthly splendour, we shall certainly find some defect and imperfection in it, and be obliged to conclude with the poet, that "since the earth began to be inhabited by men, a full cup of good things, without any mixture of evil, never fell to the share of one man: a graceful body is often dishonoured by bad morals, and a mind of uncommon beauty is sometimes joined to a deformed body."

But what we call the chief and supreme good must of necessity be complete, and entirely free from every defect; and therefore what is not in every respect perfect, properly speaking, is not perfect at all. The happiness of rich and great men, which the poor admire and respect, is only a gaudy and splendid species of misery. What St. Bernard says of the rash and ill founded opinion which the

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generality of mankind form of the lives of the saints, from the imperfect knowledge they have of them, "They see our crosses, but they know not our comforts," may be here inverted: we see the advantages of those men that are puffed up with riches and honours, but we see not their troubles and vexations. "I wish," says one, "that those who desire riches would consult rich men; they would then certainly be of another opinion."

I will spend no more time in describing or lamenting the wretched state of mankind on this earth, because it would answer no end; for suppose a more complete assemblage of sublunary enjoyments and a more perfect system of earthly felicity than ever the sun beheld, the mind of man would instantly devour it, and, as if it were still empty and unsatisfied, would require something more. And indeed, by this insatiable thirst, the mind of man discovers its natural excellence and dignity; for thus it proves, that all things here below are insufficient to satisfy or make it happy; and its capacity is so great and extensive, that it cannot be filled by the whole of this visible frame of things; for, as St. Augustine observes, "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they return to Thee." The mind that makes God its refuge, after it has been much tossed to and fro, and distressed in the world, enjoys perfect peace and absolute security; and it is the fate of those, and those only, who put into this safe harbour, to have what the same St. Augustine calls a very great matter, "The frailty of man, together with the security of God."

Therefore it is not without reason, that the royal psalmist boasts not of his victories nor the splendour of his royal crown, but of this one advantage; *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup. Thou maintainest my lot;* and, on the justest grounds, he immediately adds, *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.* And it is quite agreeable to reason, that what improves and completes any thing else must be itself more complete and perfect; so that the mind of man can neither be made happy by earthly enjoyments, which are all far inferior to it in dignity, nor be so in itself. Nay, neither can the angels, though of a more perfect and sublime nature, confer felicity either

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upon men or themselves; but both they and we have our happiness lodged in that eternal mind, which alone is its own felicity. Nor is it possible for us to find it any where else, but in our union with that original wisdom and goodness, from which we at first took our rise. Away then with all the fictitious schemes of felicity proposed by the philosophers, even those of them that were most artfully contrived; for even Aristotle's perfection of virtue, as well as what the Stoics fancied concerning their wise man, are mere fictions. They are nothing but dreams and fancies that ought to be banished to Utopia; for what they describe is no where to be found among men, and, if it were, it would not constitute complete felicity. So far indeed they are to be commended, that they call in the mind from external enjoyments to itself; but in this they are defective, that when the mind is returned to itself, they carry it no further nor direct it to ascend, as it were, above itself. They sometimes, it is true, drop such expressions as these, that there can be no good disposition of the mind without God: and that in order to be happy, the soul must be raised up to divine things: they also tell us, that "the wise man loves God most of all, and for this reason is the most happy man;" but these expressions they drop only at random, and by the by. O how much fuller and clearer are the instructions of the Teacher sent down from heaven; *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!*

But because the purest minds of the saints, while they sojourn in this earth, still retain some mixture of earthly dross and arise not to perfect purity, therefore they cannot yet enjoy the full vision of God, nor consequently that perfect happiness which is inseparably connected with it; for they see only darkly, and through a glass; but with the advantage even of this obscure light, they direct their steps, and go on cheerful and unwearied. The long wished for day will at length come, when they will be admitted into the fullest light. That day, which the unhappy men of this world dread as their last, the sons of light wish for as their nativity into an endless life, and embrace it with the greatest joy when it comes. And this indeed seems to me to be the strongest argument for another life and an immortality to come; for since no complete or abso-

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lutely perfect happiness is to be found in this life, it must certainly follow, that either there is no such thing to be had any where, or we must live again somewhere after our period here is out. And O what *fools* are we, and how *slow of heart to believe*, who think so rarely, and with such coolness, of that blessed country; and that in this parched and thirsty land, where even those few who are so happy, have only some foretastes of that supreme happiness! But when they remove hence, *they shall be abundantly satisfied*, or, as the word ought to be translated, *intoxicated*, *O Lord, with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.* Thus the divine psalmist expresses it; and it is certainly very surprising, that the great and ancient philosopher Pythagoras, in communicating his thoughts upon the same subject, should happen to fall upon the very same figure; for he used to promise those of his disciples who conducted themselves right in this life, that they should be continually "drunk" in that which is to come.

But what we have said formerly of the felicity of the life to come, and all that we could say were we to treat of the same subject over again, is but mere trifling. And yet it is not disagreeable to hear children speak even with stammering, about the dignity of their father, and of the riches and magnificence of his inheritance. It is pleasant and decent to speak of our native country, even while we are sojourning in a foreign land. But for the present, I shall insist no longer on this subject, but turning the tables, lay before you that dreadful punishment which stands in opposition to this happiness, by presenting you only with a transient view of the future misery of the wicked. And though this is indeed a most unpleasant task, yet nothing but our own carelessness and inattention can render it useless.

Here, first of all, it is to be observed, that as in this life there is no perfect felicity, so neither here is there any complete misery. Those, whom we look upon as the most wretched, in this world, have their sufferings checquered with many intervals of ease. But the misery to come admits of no abatement. It is all of a piece, without admitting any mixture of relief. They are surely mad with their notions, who here talk of the advantage-

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of being or existence, and contend that it is more desirable to be miserable, than not to be at all. For my part, I am fully satisfied, they can never persuade any man of the truth of their assertion, nor even believe it themselves, when they think seriously on the subject. But, not to insist on this—it is certain that, all kind of delights are for ever banished from that eternal and frightful prison. There is there no light, no day, nor sleep which is the blessing of the night, and indeed nothing at all but places full of darkness, precipices, nakedness, and all kinds of horror; no entertainments, merry meetings, nor any sensual pleasure; and to be for ever separated from all such must be no small misery, especially to those who used to pass their time amidst such scenes of mirth and jollity, and imagined themselves in some measure happy therein. And that the remembrance of this may distress them the more, they will be continually haunted with a thought, that will cleave to them like a worm devouring their bowels, and constantly keep them in mind, that out of a distracted fondness for these fleeting pleasures, which have now flown away without hope of returning, they have lost those joys that are heavenly and eternal; whereof they will have some knowledge, but what kind of knowledge that will be, and how far extended to enhance their torments, is not ours to determine. But who will attempt to express the excess of their misery, or describe those streams of brimstone and eternal flames of divine wrath? Or rather, who will not tremble, I say not in describing them, but even in thinking of them, and be quite overpowered with an idea so shocking?

That I may no further attempt to speak things unutterable and to derogate from a grand subject by inadequate expressions, behold now, my dear youths, if you believe these things; behold, I say, you have now life and death laid before you; choose for yourselves. And that you may not put off a matter of such importance, consider these things, I pray, seriously, and say to yourselves, concerning the vanishing shadows of eternal things—How long will these enjoyments last? O how soon will they pass! Even while I am speaking these words, while I am thinking of them, they fly past me. Is any one oppressed with calamities? Let him say cheerfully with a

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remarkably good man, "Lord, while I am here, kill me, burn me, only spare me there. Is there any one among you of weak capacity, unhappy in expressing himself, of an unfavourable aspect, or deformed in body? Let him say with himself—It is a matter of small consequence; I shall soon leave this habitation, and, if I am but good myself, be soon removed to the mansions of the blessed. Let these thoughts prevent his being dejected in mind, or overcome with too much sorrow. If any one is distinguished by a good understanding, or outward beauty, or riches, let him reflect and seriously consider how soon all excellencies of this kind will pass away, that he may not be vain, or lifted up with the advantages of fortune. Let it be the chief care and study of you all to avoid the works of darkness, that so you may escape utter and eternal darkness; and to embrace with open and cheerful hearts that divine light which hath shone from heaven, that when you are divested of these bodies, you may be received into the glorious mansions of that blessed and perfect light.

LECTURE XVIII.

Of the Christian Religion, and that it is the true Way to Happiness.

I CONFESS, that whenever I think on the subject, I cannot help wondering at the indolence and madness of mankind; for though we boast that to order our affairs with prudence and discretion, and conduct our lives according to the principles of reason, is the great privilege and ornament of our nature which distinguishes us from the brute creatures; how few are there, who in this respect act like men, who propose to themselves an end, and direct all their actions to the attainment of it! It is very certain, that the greatest part of mankind, with a folly something more than childish, go in quest of painted butterflies, or commonly pursue the birds with stones and clods. And even those that spin out their lives to the utmost extent of old age, for the most part gain little by it, but only this, that they may be called very aged children; being as ignorant as infants why they came into the world, and

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what will become of them when they leave it. Of all questions, none therefore can be more properly proposed to you, who are just upon the verge of manhood, I mean entering upon a rational life, than this—Whither are you going? What good have you in view? To what end do you propose to live? For hence possibly your minds may be excited within you to an earnest desire after that perfect and supreme good; and you may not content yourselves with cool speculations upon this subject, as if it were a logical or philosophical problem, that falls in your way of course; but with that application which is proper in a question concerning a matter of the greatest moment, in which it highly concerns us to be well informed, and where the highest rewards and greatest dangers are proposed to our view. And, in this hope, I have often addressed myself to you upon the subject of happiness or the supreme good at different periods of time; entertaining you in the intervals with essays and suitable exhortations upon other subjects, yet so as to observe a kind of method, and keep up a connexion throughout the whole. I have taken notice of the name and general notion of happiness, the universal desires and wishes whereby men are excited to the pursuit of it, the no less universal because natural ignorance of mankind, and their errors and mistakes in the search of it: whence it happens, that as they all run the wrong road, the faster they advance, the further they depart from it; and like those who ply the oars in a boat, they look one way and move another. And though it seemed almost unnecessary, as facts sufficiently demonstrate the truth of our assertion, yet by a brief recapitulation, wherein we took notice only of the principal heads and classes of things, we proved that happiness is by no means to be found in this earth, nor in any earthly enjoyments whatsoever. And this is no more than all, even fools as well as wise men, are willing to own. They not only pronounce one another unhappy, but with regard to this life, all of them in general, and every one for himself in particular, acknowledge that they are so. And, in this respect, experience fully justifies their belief; so that if there were no farther prospect, I am apt to believe all mankind would agree in that common saying, "that if mankind were apprized beforehand of the nature of this

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life, and it were left to their own option, none would accept of it." As the immortality of the soul has a near connexion with this subject and is a natural consequence from it, we therefore, in the next place, bestowed some time in illustrating that doctrine. In the last place we advanced some thoughts upon future happiness and misery, so far as is consistent with the weakness of our capacities to comprehend things so little known, and to express such as are in a great measure ineffable.

Having treated of these things according to our measure, it remains that we now inquire about the way which directly leads into that happy city, or to that happiness which is reserved in the heavens. This is a great and important article, comprehending the end and design of our life, as well as the hopes and comforts of it; and is very proper to be first treated of in a catechetical or, indeed, any methodical system of theology, as appears from reason and precedents; for by this discussion we are immediately introduced into the whole doctrine of true religion. Accordingly the first question in the generally received catechism, which you have in your hands, is, "What is your only consolation in life and in death?" And the first question of another catechism which not long ago was used, particularly in this university, is, "What is the only way to true felicity?" For the salvation and happiness of mankind, in subordination to the glory of God, which is undoubtedly the supreme end of all, is the peculiar and genuine scope of theology; and from it, the definition of this science seems to be most properly drawn. Nor do I imagine that any one is so weak as from hence to conclude, that it ought to be called anthropology rather than theology; for though it not only treats of the happiness of mankind, but also has this happiness, as has been observed, for its chief end and design, yet, with good reason and on many accounts, it has obtained this more sublime title. It has God for its author, whom the wisest of men would in vain attempt to find out, but from the revelation he has made of himself; every such attempt being as vain as it would be to look for the sun in the night time, by the light of a candle; for the former, like the latter, can only be seen by its own light. God cannot be known but so far as he reveals himself; which Sopho-

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cles has also admirably well expressed. "You will never," says he, "understand those divine things which the gods have thought proper to conceal, even though you should ransack all nature."

Nor has this sacred science God for its author only, but also for its subject and its ultimate end; because the knowledge of him and his worship comprehends the whole of religion, the beatific vision of him includes in it the whole of our happiness, and that happiness is at last resolved into the divine grace and bounty.

I should therefore choose to give this brief and clear definition of theology, that it is a divine doctrine, directing man to real felicity as his chief end, and conducting him to it by the way of true religion. I call it a doctrine, because it is not considered here as a habit in the mind, but as a summary of celestial truth. I call it a divine doctrine, for all the reasons already mentioned, because for instance, it is from God; he is the subject of it, and it all terminates in him at last. I call it a doctrine directing man, for I confine my notion of it to that doctrine only, which was sent down from heaven for that purpose. What signify then those distinctions, which are indeed sounding, but quite tedious and foreign to the purpose, that divide theology into archetypal and ectypal, and again into the theology of the church militant and that of the church triumphant? What they call archetypal theology is very improperly so named, for it is that perfect knowledge which God has of himself; and the theology of the church triumphant ought rather to be called θεοψια, the beatific vision of God. The theology in question, is that *dayspring from on high*, which *hath visited us, to give light to them which sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.* That peace is true happiness, and the way of peace is true religion; concerning which I shall offer a few thoughts and very briefly.

First of all you are to observe, that man is not a lawless creature, but capable of a law and actually subject to one. This expression conveys no harsh, no dishonourable idea; nay, this subjection is so far from being a burden, that it is the greatest honour. To be capable of a law is the mark and ornament of an intelligent, rational soul, and

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that which distinguishes it from the brutes: it evidently supposes a resemblance to God, and an intercourse with heaven. And to live actually under the direction of religion and the law is the great honour and ornament of human life, and what distinguishes it from the irregular conduct of the brute creation; for as the poet expresses it, "One beast devours another, fishes prey upon fishes, and birds upon birds, because they are subject to no law; but mankind live under a just law, which makes their condition far preferable." The brute creatures devour one another without blame, because they have no law; but as Juvenal observes, "Men alone of all earthly creatures, as they derive their reason from the highest heaven, are venerable for their understanding, which renders them capable of inquiring into divine things, and qualifies them for learning arts, and reducing them to practice."

And hence it appears, that we were born subject to religion and an eternal law of nature. For since our blessed Creator has thought proper to endow us with a mind and understanding, and powers sufficient for that purpose, to be sure we are bound by an indispensable law to acknowledge the primary and eternal Fountain of our own being and of all created things, to love him above all other objects, and obey his commands without reserve or exception; so that in this very law of nature is founded a strong obligation upon us to give due obedience to every divine positive institution, which he shall think proper to add for securing the purposes of religion and equity. Wherefore, when our first parents, by eating the forbidden fruit, transgressed the symbolical command intended as a proof of their obedience, by that very act they most basely broke the primary and great law of nature, which is the foundation of religion and of every other law whatever.

It is not my intention to speak here of our redemption by the Messias, the only begotten Son of God the Creator: it is sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that our great Redeemer has indeed delivered us from the chains of sin and death, but has by no means dissolved the bonds of religion, and the everlasting law of nature. Nay, these are, in many respects, strengthened and confirmed by this redemption; and a cheerful submission to

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them by virtue of his Spirit, who is poured out upon us, is a great part of that royal *liberty of the sons of God*, which is secured to us by his means, as by imitating his example we arrive at the full possession of it, which is reserved for us in the heavenly kingdom. The way therefore to happiness, which we are in search of is true religion, and such, in a very remarkable manner, is that of Christianity.

On the truth and excellence of this religion you have a great many learned writers, both ancient and modern. And indeed, it is exceeding plain, from its own internal evidence, that of all the forms of religion that ever the world saw, there is none more excellent than that of Christianity which we profess, wherein we glory, and in which we think ourselves happy amidst all the troubles of the world. There is none that is more certain and infallible with regard to its history, more sublime with regard to its mysteries, more pure and perfect in its precepts, or more venerable for the grave simplicity of its rites and worship; nay, it appears evident, that this religion alone is, in every respect, incomparably preferable to every other. It remains—what do you think I am going to say? It remains, that we become true Christians. I repeat it again—if we will be happy, let us be Christians. You will say—Your wish is easily satisfied; you have your desire; we are all Christians already. I wish it may be so. I will not however object to any particular person upon this head. But every one of you, by a short trial, wherein he will be both witness and judge, may settle this important point within himself.—We are all Christians. Be it so. But are we poor in spirit? Are we humble, meek, and pure in heart? Do we pray without ceasing? Have we nailed all our carnal appetites and desires to our Saviour's cross, *living no longer unto ourselves but unto him that died for us?* This is the true description of a Christian, by the testimony of that gospel which we acknowledge to be Christ's; and those who are entire strangers to these dispositions of mind know not *the way of peace*. These I earnestly entreat and beseech to rouse themselves and shake off their indolence and sloth, lest, by indulging the vile desires of the flesh, they lose their souls for ever. But if there are any among

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you, and indeed I believe there are some, who with all their hearts aspire to these Christian virtues, and, by their means to that kingdom, which can never be shaken, *be strong in the Lord, have your loins girt about with truth; be sober and hope to the end.* You will never repent of this holy warfare, in which the battle is short, the victory so certain, and your triumphal crown and the peace procured by this conflict will last for ever.

LECTURE XIX.

Holiness the only Happiness on this Earth.

THE journey we are engaged in is indeed great, and the way uphill; but the glorious prize which is set before us is also great, and our great and valiant Captain, who has long ago ascended up on high, supplies us with strength. If our courage at any time fails us, let us fix our eyes upon him, and, according to the advice of the apostle, in his divine Epistle to the Hebrews, *look unto Jesus*, removing our eyes from all inferior objects, that being carried up on high, they may be fixed upon him; which the original words seem to import. Then being supported by the Spirit of Christ, we shall overcome all those obstacles in our way, that seem most difficult to our indolent and effeminate flesh. And, though the way from the earth towards heaven is by no means easy, yet even the very difficulty will give us pleasure, when our hearts are thus eagerly engaged and powerfully supported. Even difficulties and hardships are attended with particular pleasure, when they fall in the way of a courageous mind; as the poet Lucan expresses it, "Serpents, thirst, and burning sands, are pleasing to virtue. Patience delights in hardships; and honour when it is dearly purchased, is possessed with the greater satisfaction."

If what we are told concerning that glorious city obtain credit with us, we shall cheerfully travel towards it, nor shall we be at all deterred by the difficulties that may be in the way. But, however, as it is true and more suitable to the weakness of our minds, which are rather apt to be affected with things present and near than such as are at a great distance, we ought not to pass over in silence,

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that the way to the happiness reserved in heaven, which leads through this earth, is not only agreeable because of the blessed prospect it opens and the glorious end to which it conducts; but also for its own sake, and on account of the innate pleasure to be found in it, is far preferable to any other way of life that can be made choice of or indeed imagined. Nay, that we may not, by low expressions, derogate from a matter so grand and so conspicuous, that holiness and true religion which leads directly to the highest felicity, is itself the only happiness, as far as it can be enjoyed on this earth. Whatever naturally tends to the attainment of any other advantage, participates, in some measure of the nature of that advantage. Now this way to perfect felicity is a means, that, in a very great measure participates of the nature of its end; nay, it is the beginning of that happiness, it is also to be considered as a part of it, and differs from it, in its completest state not so much in kind, as in degree; so that in scripture it has the same names; as, for instance, in that passage of the Evangelist, *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God;* that is not only the way to eternal life, but also the beginning and first rudiments of it, seeing the same knowledge when completed, or the full beatific vision of God, is eternal life in its fulness and perfection. Nor does the divine apostle make any distinction between these two. *Now*, says he, *we see through a glass darkly, but then we shall see openly*, or as he expresses it, *face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I also am known.* That celestial life is called an *inheritance in light*, and the heirs of it, even while they are sojourning in this earth, *children of the light*, and expressly *light in the Lord. You were*, says the apostle, *sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.* They will be there perfectly holy and without spot; and even here they are called holy and, in some respect, they are so. Hence it is, that those who are really and truly good and pious are, in scripture, often called blessed, though they are not fully and perfectly so. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord. Blessed are the undefiled in the way.*

Even the philosophers give their testimony to this truth, and their sentiments on this subject are not altogether to

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be rejected; for they almost unanimously are agreed that felicity, so far as it can be enjoyed in this life, consists, solely, or at least principally, in virtue. But, as to their assertion, that this virtue is perfect in a perfect life, it is rather expressing what were to be wished, than describing things as they are. They might have said with more truth and justice, that it is imperfect in an imperfect life; which, no doubt, would have satisfied them, if they had known, that it was to be made perfect in another place, and in another life that truly deserves the name, and will be complete and perfect. In this however, we heartily agree with them, that virtue or, as we rather choose to express it, piety, which is absolutely the sum and substance of all virtues and all wisdom, is the only happiness of this life, so far as it is capable thereof.

And if we seriously consider this subject but a little, we shall find the saying of the wise king Solomon concerning this wisdom to be unexceptionably true; *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* Doth religion require any thing of us more than that we live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?* Now what, I pray, can be more pleasant or peaceable than these? Temperance is always at leisure, luxury always in a hurry. The latter weakens the body and pollutes the soul, the former is the sanctity, purity, and sound state of both. It is one of Epicurus's fixed maxims, that "life can never be pleasant without virtue." Vices seize upon men with the violence and rage of furies; but the Christian virtues replenish the breast which they inhabit with a heavenly peace and abundant joy, and thereby render it like that of an angel. The slaves of pleasure and carnal affections have within them, even now, an earnest of future torments; so that, in this present life, we may truly apply to them that expression in the Revelations. *They that worship the beast, have no rest day nor night.* "There is perpetual peace with the humble," says the most devout A Kempis, "but the proud and the covetous are never at rest."

If we speak of charity, which is the root and spring of justice, what a lasting pleasure does it diffuse through the soul! "Envy," as the saying is, "has no days of festivity:" it enjoys not even its own advantages, while

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it is tormented with those it sees in the possession of others; but charity is happy, not only in its own enjoyments, but also in those of others, even as if they were its own: nay, it is then most happy in the enjoyment of its own good things, when, by liberality it makes them the property of others. In short, it is a Godlike virtue. There is nothing more divine in man, "than to wish well to man, and to do good to as many as one possibly can." But piety, which worships God in constant prayer and celebrates Him with the highest praises, raises man above himself, and gives him rank among the angels. And contemplation, which is indeed the most genuine and purest pleasure of the human soul, and the very summit of felicity, is no where so sublime and enriched, as it will be found to be in true religion, where it may expatiate in a system of divine truths most extensive, clear and infallibly certain; mysteries that are most profound; and hopes that are the most exalted; and he that can render these subjects familiar to his mind, even on this earth enjoys a life replete with heavenly pleasure.

I might enlarge greatly on this subject, and add a great many other considerations to those I have already offered, but I shall only further observe that that sweet virtue of contentment so effectual for quieting the mind, which philosophy sought for in vain, religion alone has found; and has also discovered, that it takes its rise from a firm confidence in the almighty power of divine Providence. For what is there that can possibly give uneasiness to him who commits himself entirely to that paternal goodness and wisdom, which he knows to be infinite, and securely devolves the care of all his concerns upon it?

If any of you object, that we often see good men meet with severe treatment, and also read, that *many are the afflictions of the righteous*, I answer—do you not also read what immediately follows? *But the Lord delivereth him out of them all*, Psal. xxxiv. 19. And it would be madness to deny, that this more than compensates the other. But neither are the wicked quite exempted from the misfortunes and calamities of life; and when these fall upon them, they have nothing to support them under such pressures, none to extricate or deliver them. But a true Christian, encouraged by a good conscience and depending upon the

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divine favour, bears with patience all these evils, by the efforts of generous love and unshaken faith. They all seem light to him. He despises what he suffers, while he waits with patience for the object of his hope. And indeed what either in life or in death can he be afraid of, whose *life is hid with Christ in God;* and of whom it may be justly said, without exaggeration, "If the world should be crushed and broken to pieces, he would be undaunted, even while the ruins fell upon his head?"

LECTURE XX.

Of our Happiness, particularly that it lies in God, who alone can direct us to the true Way of attaining to it; that this Way he has discovered in the sacred Scriptures, the divine Authority whereof is asserted and illustrated.

THESE two expressions, that there is a beginning and that there is also an end, convey matters great in themselves, and which ought to be considered as of vast importance to us. It is absolutely necessary that there should be some one principle of all things; and, by an equal degree of necessity, this Principle must be of all others, the greatest and the best. It is also necessary, that he who gave being to all things, must have proposed to himself some end to be attained by the production and disposal of them; but, as the end of the best of all agents must itself also be the highest and the best, this end can be no other than himself. And the reasonings of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews concerning the oath of God may also be applied to this case; *As he had no greater to swear by,* says the apostle, *he sware by himself.* In like manner, as he had no greater or better end to propose, he proposed himself. *He hath made all things for himself,* says the author of the Book of Proverbs, *even the wicked for the day of evil.* And the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, gives us a lively description of that incomparable circle, the most complete of all figures; *Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

Now man, the ornament and master-piece of all the visible creation, by extraordinary art, and in a method

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peculiar to himself, returns to his first original, and has his Creator not only for the principle of his being and of his well-being, but also for his end. Thus, by a wonderful instance of wisdom and goodness, God has so connected his own glory with our happiness, that we cannot properly intend or desire the one, but the other must follow of course, and our felicity is at last resolved into his eternal glory. The other works of God serve to promote his honour; but man, by rational knowledge and will, offers himself and all that he has as a sacrifice to his Creator. From his knowledge of him, he is induced to love him; and in consequence of his love, he attains at last to the enjoyment of him. And it is the wisdom, as well as the happiness of man, to propose to himself, as the scope and ultimate end of his life, that very thing which his exalted Creator had proposed before.

But, that we may proceed gradually in our speculations upon this subject, we must first conclude, that there is a proper end intended for man; that this end is suited to his nature, and perfectly accommodated to all his wants and desires, that thus the principal part of this wonderful fabric may not be quite irregular, and labour under a manifest imperfection.

Nor can there be a more important speculation, nor one more worthy of man, than that which concerns his own end, and that good which is fully and perfectly suited to his circumstances. Chance or fortune must, of necessity, have a great influence in our life, when we live at random. We must, therefore, if we be wise, or rather that we may be wise, propose to ourselves an end, to which all our actions ought to have a reference, and by which, as a certain fixed star, we are to direct our course. But it is surprising to observe how much all the wisest men among the heathens were perplexed in their inquiries after this end, and into how many different opinions they were divided about it. Of this, however, we have spoken at greater length in another place.

Now, to be brief, it is necessary, that this good or end should be perfectly suitable, not easily taken away, nay, such as we can by no means be deprived of; and finally, it must consist of such things as have a particular relation to the soul, and not of external enjoyments. Whence

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slavish and brutal pleasures, vain and perishing honours and riches, which only serve to support and promote the former, are, in this inquiry, justly and without the least hesitation hissed off the stage by all sound philosophers; who with great unanimity acknowledge, that our felicity consists solely, or at least principally, in virtue. But your favourite philosopher Aristotle, and the Peripatetics who are his followers, seem to doubt whether virtue alone be sufficient for this purpose, and appear not to be very consistent with themselves. The Stoics, who proceeded with greater courage and acted more like men, affirmed, that virtue was fully sufficient for this purpose without the helps and supplements required by the former. And that, while they bestowed such high praises on virtue, they might not seem to have quite forgotten God, they not only said, that virtue was something divine, in which they were joined by Aristotle, but also concluded, that their wise men did all things with a direct reference to God. It was also a general maxim with the followers of Plato, that "the end of man is to be, as far as is possible, made like unto God." And Plato himself in his second book of Laws and in his Phædo asserts, that man's chief good is the knowledge of the truth; yet as this knowledge is not perfect in the present life, he is of opinion, that it can scarcely be said of any man, that he is happy here below; but there is hope to be entertained concerning the dead, provided they are purified before they leave the world.

But there are two things particularly with regard to this question which our religion and most precious faith teaches with incomparably greater fulness and evidence, than all the schools and books of the philosophers.—

1. That our felicity is not to terminate in ourselves, but in God. *Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord;* and *The pure in heart shall see God.* "To seek God," says St. Augustine, "is to desire happiness; and to find him is that happiness."

2. That our happiness is not confined within the limits of this short life, nor does it end with it. On the contrary, it is scarcely begun in this world, but when the present life comes to a period, then this happiness is completed and becomes eternal. Our life on this earth,

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therefore, is only so far happy as it has a resemblance to that we shall enjoy in heaven, and becomes, as it were, an earnest of it: that is, when it is employed in pure and sincere piety, in obedience to the will of God, and in an ambition to promote his glory, till we arrive at that happy state, where our hunger and thirst shall be abundantly satisfied, and yet our appetites never cloyed. For it is evident, that man, in this life, becomes so much the more perfect and happy, in proportion as he has his mind and affections more thoroughly conformed to the pattern of that most blessed and perfect Life. And this is indeed the great ambition of a true Christian; this is his study, which he ceases not to pursue with ardour day and night: nor does he let so much as one day pass without copying some lines of that perfect pattern. And the more he advances in purity of mind, the greater progress he makes in the knowledge and contemplation of divine things.

But who will instruct us with regard to the means of reaching this blessed mark? Who will show us how we may attain this conformity to God, and most effectually promote his honour and glory, so that at last we may come to the enjoyment of him in that endless life, and be for ever satisfied with the beatific vision of him? What faithful guide shall we find to direct us in this way? Surely he himself must be our Leader. There is no other besides him, who can answer our purpose. It is he alone that acquaints us with his own nature, as far as it is necessary for us to know it; and it is he alone that directs us to the way wherein he chooses to be worshiped. God cannot be known but by his own revelation of himself. When he is pleased to wrap himself up in a cloud, neither man in his original integrity, nay, nor even the angels, can know or investigate his nature or his intentions. We are indeed acquainted in the sacred records, *that the heavens declare the glory of God;* and this is indeed very true in certain respects; but they do by no means declare the hidden mysteries of the Creator, nor his intentions, and the manner of that worship and service he requires from his reasonable creatures. And therefore the psalmist, having begun the psalm with the voice and declaration of the heavens, immediately after mentions another light much clearer than the sun himself, and a volume or book

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more perfect than the language of all the spheres. Nothing is more certain than that the doctrine which leads us to God, must take its rise from him; for by no art whatever can the waters be made to rise higher than their fountain. It was therefore absolutely necessary for the purpose I have mentioned, that some revelation concerning God should be made to mankind by himself; and accordingly he did reveal himself to them from the beginning. And these revelations, the father of lies mimicked by those delusions of his, that were published by the heathen oracles. The divine Wisdom, in revealing himself to mankind, has thought proper, at different periods of time, to make use of different methods and ways, or, according to that declaration of the Epistle to the Hebrews, *at sundry times and in divers manners;* but at last it seemed good to him, that this sacred doctrine should be committed to writing, that with the greater certainty and purity it might be handed down to succeeding ages. If we consider his absolute power, it would certainly have been as easy for him to have preserved this doctrine pure and entire, without committing it to writing; but, for the most part, he has been pleased to make use of means naturally suited and adopted to his purposes, and disposes all things so as effectually to secure his ends, yet in an easy natural manner suited to our capacities and conceptions of things.

If any one would prove, that these books which we receive as such, are in fact the repositories of this sacred and celestial doctrine, the most proper method he could take would be, first, to show that the sacred history and doctrines contained in them, are true; and then, from their own testimony, to conclude them divine. For, the truth of our religion being once well established, it is assuredly a most just postulatum, and such as ought not to be denied to any sect of men, that, in this instance, the testimony of the Christian church should be believed, when it points out the books wherein the sum and substance of that religion are originally and authentically deposited.

The truth of the sacred history being once granted, the divinity of the doctrine will naturally follow of course, as the history mentions so many and so great miracles that were wrought in confirmation of the doctrine; those par-

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ticularly that were performed in proof of the old testament by Moses, the servant of God, by whose ministry the law was given to the Jews; and those that were wrought in confirmation of the new, by Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and author of the evangelic law; as, also, those that were wrought by his servants the apostles, and other Christians. And absolutely to deny the force of all these would be an instance of impudence and obstinacy so great, that the keenest enemies of the Christian name of old did not venture upon it. But the scriptures have two great evidences of their divinity—their own internal character, and external testimony.

There are two things which principally prove their internal character—first, the incomparable sublimity and purity of the doctrine they contain: for in vain will you look for such profound mysteries and such pure and holy precepts any where else—secondly, the inimitable and evidently divine majesty of the style, attended, at the same time, with a surprising and wonderful simplicity. Their voice is not the voice of man; but the whole of them, notwithstanding their great extent, sounds something more grand than can be expected from the mouths of mortal men. Nor ought we to pass over that divine efficacy which the scriptures have, not only to move the minds of men, but also, by a divine operation, to change them into something quite different from what they were before: according to that saying of Lactantius, "Give me a fierce, cruel, and passionate man, with a few of the words of God I will make him as meek as a lamb."

And the external testimony already mentioned, has, to be sure, as much weight as any thing of that kind can possibly have. Who would deny to the regular succession of the catholic church the credit of a witness? Who, on the other hand, would claim the authority of a judge and arbitrator? It would be quite silly, to ascribe to the church a decisive power; as if, when a book were first presented to it, or brought out of any place where it had been long concealed, it could immediately pronounce whether that book was of divine authority or not. The church is only a witness with regard to those books we acknowledge; and its testimony extends no farther than this, that they were received in the first ages of Christia-

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nity as sacred and divinely inspired, and, as such, handed down from age to age to the church that now is. And he that would venture to discredit this testimony, must have a heart of lead and a face of brass.

There is no occasion to dispute so fiercely about the inward testimony of the Holy Ghost: for I am persuaded that those who talk about it, understand nothing more by it, than that the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of men that faith whereby they cheerfully and sincerely receive these books and the doctrine contained in them as divine; because such faith either includes in the very notion of it, or at least is necessarily connected with, a religious frame of mind, and a sincere disposition to universal obedience. And *he that believeth*, as the apostle John expresseth it, *has the testimony in himself*, though he cannot convey or transfer it to others. Now to assert the necessity of such an internal testimony is nothing more than to say, that whatever evidence the scripture may have in itself or from other considerations, yet the divine faith of this truth must be from above. And he that would deny this would thereby plainly discover that he was an entire stranger to that faith itself. "The scripture," says Thomas à Kempis, "must surely be believed and understood by means of the same Spirit by whom it was at first delivered." And, as St. Augustine expresses it, "the only effectual teacher is he who has his chair in heaven, and yet instructs the hearts of men on this earth." The same divine Spirit plants faith in the mind, together with the proper intelligence of divine things, and daily augments and improves these dispositions. This great gift of the Spirit is therefore to be sought by fervent and constant prayer; and the Son of God, who is truth itself, has assured us, that his most bountiful Father will give it to those that ask him. Aristotle has told us, that "divine inspiration is to be sought by sacrifices; and it is no less true, that the faith and understanding of things revealed by divine inspiration, are to be sought by prayer. Varro tells us, that he wrote first of human and then of divine institutions, because societies of men existed first, and the latter were instituted by them. True religion, on the contrary, instead of being instituted by any city or society on earth, hath instituted a city altogether heavenly and divine,

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and is itself inspired by God, who is the giver of eternal life to all that worship him in sincerity.

It is truly surprising to observe how differently this religion was of old received among men, and what different entertainment it meets with even to this day, though the doctrine has been always the same, though it is still enforced by the same arguments, and has the same difficulties and prejudices to struggle with. When the divine apostle preached in the Areopagus at Athens, a great many mocked and ridiculed him: others said, *We will hear thee again of this matter: but certain men clave unto him, and believed.* And that we may not think this faith in those who believed, was owing to their uncommon penetration or sagacity on the one hand, or to their weakness and simplicity on the other, of the two mentioned in scripture who believed on this occasion, the one was a philosopher and the other a woman. Now, though without doubt human liberty is to be allowed its due weight in this matter, yet we cannot help acknowledging, that a certain influence or energy seems to discover itself here.

The basis of religion is faith, just apprehensions or right notions of God, according to Epictetus. St. Ignatius says, "Faith is the beginning of life, and love the end of it." And the words of the apostle are, *He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* So that the giving of a law to man, and the enforcing it with the motives of rewards and punishments, is not inconsistent with the filial and disinterested obedience of a rational creature even in a state of innocnce.

All true and lively faith begets love; and thus that heavenly light is the vehicle of heat. And as, by this means, true faith has a tendency to the practice of obedience, so all true obedience depends upon faith and flows from it. But it also proceeds from love, because faith first produces love, and then works by it. All knowledge of mysteries is vain and of no value, unless it have an influence upon the affections, and thereby upon the whole conduct of life. The luminaries of heaven are placed on high; but they are so placed, that they may shine and perform their periods, for the benefit of this earth.

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We must first believe that God is. This truth is written in capital letters on every page of the sacred books of scripture; for all things that are therein delivered by God and concerning him confirm this, and take it for a primary and undoubted principle. But these sacred books acknowledge another universal evidence of this leading truth, and an evidence quite distinct from theirs, to which they refer all, even the most obstinate unbelievers and those that are entirely ignorant of this celestial doctrine, for full conviction; Rom. i. 20. As it is quite plain, that the testimony of the written word will have little or no influence upon men who have not received the least tincture of divine faith, should any person, disputing with them, reason after this manner—There is a God, because this is asserted in the sacred scriptures, and their testimony must by all means be believed, because they are the word of God—an argument of this kind would certainly have no other effect than to expose the person who urged it, to the ridicule of atheists and unbelievers; because it evidently begs the question, and runs into a vicious circle. He therefore, who would bring over such persons to the faith, must reason after a quite different manner. But let him, on the other hand, who once accepts these books with the submission due to their real dignity and divine authenticity, receive light and edification from them on every article of faith, and with regard to the whole system of religion in general. Let him, also, in congratulation to their exalted Author, cry out, *With thee, O Lord, is the fountain of life; and in thy light we shall see light.* And let him that desires to be, not only a nominal proficient in theology, but φιλόθεος καὶ θεοδίδακτος, a real lover of God and willing to be taught by him, resolve within himself, above all things, to make this sacred volume his constant study, mixing his reading with frequent and fervent prayer: for if this be omitted, his labour will be altogether in vain, supposing him to be ever so well versed, not only in these books, but also to have all the advantages that can be had from the knowledge of languages, and the assistance of commentators and interpreters.

Different men have different views in reading this book. As, in the same field, the ox looks for grass, the hound for a hare, and the stork for a lizard, some, fond of cri-

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tical remarks, pick up nothing but little stones and shells; others run in pursuit of sublime mysteries, giving themselves but very little trouble about the precepts and instructions that are clear and evident; and these plunge themselves into a pit that has no bottom. But the genuine disciples of this true wisdom are those, who make it their daily employment to purify their hearts by the water of these fountains, and reduce their whole lives to a conformity with this heavenly doctrine. They desire not to know these things, only that they may have the reputation of knowledge or to be distinguished in the world, but that their souls may be healed and their steps directed, so that they may be led through the paths of righteousness to the glorious felicity which is set before them.

The sum of all is, that our felicity lies solely and entirely in that blessed God who is also the fountain and source of our being; that the only means of our union with him is true religion; and this again consists in our entertaining just notions of God, worshiping him acceptably, and endeavouring after a constant and unwearied obedience to all his commands, according to that most pure and perfect rule laid down in those divine books which we profess to receive as such. Let us, therefore, have constantly fixed in our minds these words of the psalmist, *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, that walk in the way of the Lord. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.* Psal. cxix. 1. 4, 5.

LECTURE XXI.

Of the Divine Attributes.

Of all the maxims that are naturally written on the heart of man, there is none more certain or more universally known, than *that God is;* concerning which I have given a dissertation some time ago. But of all the secrets and hidden things of nature, which have been the subject of human study and inquiry, there is nothing by any means so difficult or unsearchable, as to know *what he is.* The saying of St. Augustine concerning time is well known in the schools: with how much greater truth might it be said

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of him, who is more ancient than time, and who bade time flow from the beginning, that *he hath made darkness his hiding place, and amidst that darkness dwells in light inaccessible;* which, to our eyes, is certainly more dark than darkness itself! "O the Divine darkness!" says a great man; and another, most acutely, "If you divide or cut asunder this darkness, who will shine forth?" When, therefore, we are to speak of him, let us always call to remembrance the admonition which bids us speak *with reverence and fear;* for what can we say that is worthy of him, since man, when he speaks of God, is but a blind person describing light? Yet, blind as we are, there is one thing we may with great truth say of that glorious light, and let us frequently repeat it—O when will that blessed day shine forth, which shall deliver the souls from those thick integuments of flesh, that, like scales on the eye, obstruct its sight, and shall introduce it into a more full and open view of that primitive, eternal Light! Perhaps, the properest answer we could give to the question, what is God? would be to observe a most profound silence; or, if we should think proper to give any answer, it ought to be something next to this absolute silence; namely, *God is;* which gives us a higher and better idea of him, than any thing we can either express or conceive.

Theological writers mention three methods whereby men come to some kind of knowledge of God themselves, and communicate that knowledge to others—the way of negation, the way of causation, and the way of eminence. Yet the very terms that are used to express these ways, show what a faint knowledge of the invisible Being is to be attained by them; so that the two last may be justly reduced to the first, and all our knowledge of this kind called negative. For to pretend to give any explanation of the divine essence, as distinct from what we call his attributes, would be a refinement so absurd, that, under the appearance of more accurate knowledge, it would betray our ignorance the more. And so unaccountable would it be to attempt any such thing with regard to the unsearchable majesty of God, that possibly the most towering and exalted genius on earth ought frankly to acknowledge, that we know neither our own essence, nor that of any other creature, even the meanest and most

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contemptible. Though in the schools they distinguish the divine attributes or excellencies, and that by no means improperly, into communicable and incommunicable, yet, we ought so to guard this distinction, as always to remember that those which are called communicable, when applied to God, are not only to be understood in a manner incommunicable and quite peculiar to himself, but also, that in him they are, in reality, infinitely different from those virtues, or rather, in a matter where the disparity of the subjects is so very great, those shadows of virtues, that go under the same name either in men or angels; for it is not only true, that all things in the infinite and eternal Being are infinite and eternal, but they are also, though in a manner quite inexpressible, *himself*. He is good without quality, great without quantity. He is good in such a sense as to be called, by the evangelist, the only good Being. He is also the only wise Being; *the only wise God*, saith the apostle. And the same apostle tells us, in another place, *that he only hath immortality*, that is, from his own nature, and not from the will or disposition of another. "If we are considered as joined to or united with God," says an ancient writer of great note, "we have a being, we live, and in some sort are wise; but, if we are compared with God, we have no wisdom at all, nor do we live, or so much as have any existence." All other things were by him brought out of nothing, in consequence of a free act of his will, by means of his infinite power; so that they may be justly called mere contingencies, and he is the only necessary existent Being. Nay, he is the only *really existent Being*; τὸ ὄντως ὄν, or, as Plotinus expresses it, τὸ ὑπερόντως ὄν; thus also the Septuagint speaks of him as the only existent Being, ὁ ων. And so also does a heathen poet. This is likewise implied in the exalted name Jehovah, which expresses his being, and that he has it from himself; but what that being is, or wherein its essence, so to speak, consists, it does not say; nor, if it did, could we at all conceive it. Nay, so far is that name from discovering what his being is, that it plainly insinuates that his existence is hid and covered with a veil. *I am who I am*, or, *I am what I am*. As if he had said—I myself know what I am, but you neither know nor can know it; and if I should declare wherein my being consists, you

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could not conceive it. He has however manifested in his works, and in his word, what it is our interest to know, that he is *the Lord God, merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth.*

We call him a most pure spirit, and mean to say, that he is of a nature entirely incorporeal; yet this word, in the Greek, Hebrew, and all other languages, according to its primitive and natural signification, conveys no other idea than that of a gentle gale or wind, which every one knows to be a body, though rarefied to a very great degree; so that, when we speak of that infinite Purity, all words fail us; and even when we think of it, all the refinements of the acutest understanding are quite at a stand, and become entirely useless.

It is, in every respect, as necessary to acknowledge his eternity, as his being; provided that, when we mention the term God, we mean by it the first Being, supposing that expression to include also his self-existence. This idea of a first and eternal Being is again inseparably connected with an infinite degree of all possible perfection, together with immutability and absolute perseverance therein.

In like manner, if we suppose God to be the first of all beings, we must unavoidably therefrom conclude his unity. As to the ineffable Trinity subsisting in this unity, a mystery discovered only by the sacred scriptures, especially in the New Testament where it is more clearly revealed than in the Old, let others boldly pry into it, if they please, while we receive it with an humble faith, and think it sufficient for us to admire and adore.

The other attributes that use to be mentioned on this subject, may be supposed to be perfectly comprehended under the following three, power, wisdom, and goodness: for holiness, justice, mercy, infinite bounty, may be, with great propriety, ranked under the general term of goodness.

But rather than insist upon metaphysical speculations, let us, while we walk daily in these pleasant fields, be constantly culling fresh and never fading flowers. When the psalmist cries out, *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and of his greatness there is no end,* "he wanted to show," says Augustine, "how great he is. But how

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can this be done? Though he repeated *great, great,* the whole day, it would have been to little purpose, for he must have ended at last, because the day would have ended; but his greatness was before the beginning of days, and will reach beyond the end of time." The poet expresses himself admirably well; "I will praise thee, O blessed God, with my voice; I will praise thee, also with silence; for thou, O inexpressible Father, who canst never be known, understandest the silence of the mind, as well as any words or expressions."

LECTURE XXII.

How to regulate Life according to the Rules of Religion.

I HAVE now, at different times, addressed myself to you upon several subjects of great importance and of the utmost necessity; though what I have hitherto said was only designed as a preface or introduction to what I further proposed. But to attempt to prosecute this design at the very end of the year, would be quite improper and to little or no purpose. I shall, therefore, altogether forbear entering upon it, and, for this time, lay before you a little advice, which may be useful, not only in order to employ to greater advantage the months of vacation that are now at hand, but also the better to regulate your whole lives.

And my first advice shall be, to avoid too much sleep, which wastes the morning hours, that are most proper for study as well as for the exercises of religion, and stupifies and enervates the strength of body and mind. I remember that the famous abbot of Clairevaux, St. Bernard, when he found the friars sleeping immoderately, used to say, that "they slept like the secular clergy." And though we do not admit of the severe rules to which the monks subjected themselves, we must at least allow, that the measure and degree of sleep and other bodily refreshments, suitable for a young man devoted to study and devotion, is very far different from that excess in which the common sort of mankind indulge themselves.

Another advice, which is akin to and nearly connected

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with the former, shall be, to observe temperance in eating and drinking; for moderation in sleeping generally follows sobriety in eating and other sensual gratifications; but that thick cloud of vapours which arises from a full stomach, must of necessity overwhelm all the animal spirits, and keep them long locked up in an indolent, inactive state. Therefore, the Greeks, not without reason, express these two duties, to be sober and to be watchful, indifferently by the same term. And the apostle Peter, that he might make this connexion more evident, uses indeed two words for this purpose, but exhorts to these duties as closely connected together, or rather as if they were in some respect, but one: *Be sober, be vigilant.* And, in the same Epistle, having substituted another word for sobriety, he expresses watchfulness by the same word he had put for sobriety in the other place; *Be sober* and *watch*, 1 Pet. iv. 7. Both these dispositions are so applied to the mind, as to include a sober and watchful state of the body and senses; as this is exceedingly useful, nay, quite necessary, in order to a correspondent frame of the mind, and that disposition both of body and mind, not only subservient, but also necessary, to piety and constancy in prayer; *Be sober and watch unto prayer.* 1 Pet. iv. 7.

When the body is reduced to its lightest and most active state, still, as it is corruptible, it is, to be sure, a burden to the mind. How much more must it be so, when it is depressed with an immoderate load of meat and drink, and, in consequence of this, of sleep! Nor can the mind rouse itself, or use the wings of contemplation and prayer with freedom, when it is overpowered with so heavy a load: nay, neither can it make any remarkable progress in the study of human literature, but will move slowly and embarrassed; be at a stand, like a wheel carriage in deep clay. The Greeks very justly expressed the virtue we are now recommending, by the term Σωφροσύνη, it being, as your favourite philosopher Aristotle observes in his Ethics, the great preservative of the mind. He is certainly a very great enemy to his own understanding, who lives high and indulges himself in luxury. A fat belly is seldom accompanied with an acute understanding. Nor is it my intention in this, only to warn you against drunkenness and luxury; I would willingly hope that such advice would

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be superfluous to you: but, in this conflict, I would willingly carry you to such a pitch of victory, that, at your ordinary and least delicious meals, you should always stop some degrees within the bounds to which your appetite would carry you. Consider that, as Cato said, "the belly has no ears;" but it has a mouth, into which a bridle must be put, and therefore I address not myself to it, but to the directing mind that is set over it, which, for that reason, ought to govern the body with all its senses, and curb them at its pleasure. St. Bernard's words are admirable to this purpose; "A prudent mind, devoted to God, ought so to act in its body, as the master of a family in his own house. He ought not to suffer his flesh to be, as Solomon expresses it, like a brawling woman, nor any carnal appetite to act like a rebellious servant; but to inure them to obedience and patience. He must not have his senses for his guides, but bring them into subjection and subserviency to reason and religion. He must, by all means, have his house and family so ordered and well disciplined, that he can say to one, 'Go,' and he goeth, and to another, 'Come,' and he cometh, and to his servant the body, 'Do this,' and it doeth what it is bid without murmuring. The body must also be treated with a little hardship, that it may not be disobedient to the mind," for he, saith Solomon, *that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become a* rebellious *son at last.* This is what I would have you aspire to, a conquest over your flesh and all its lusts; for they carry on a deadly war against your souls, and their desires are then most to be resisted, when they flatter most. What an unhappy and dishonourable inversion of nature it is, when the flesh commands and the mind is in subjection! when the flesh, which is vile, gross, earthly, and soon to be the food of worms, governs the soul, that is the breath of God!

Another thing I would have you beware of, is immoderate speech. The evils of the tongue are many; but the shortest way to find a remedy for them all, is to study silence, and avoid, as the poet expresses it, "excessive prating, and a vast desire of speaking."

He is a perfect man as the apostle James expresses it, *who offends not in word.* And therefore, doubtless, he that speaks least offends in this respect more rarely. But,

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in the multitude of words, as the wise man observes, *there wants not sin*. To speak much, and also to the purpose, seldom falls to the share of one man. Now that we may avoid loquacity, we must love solitude and render it familiar, that so every one may have an opportunity to speak much to himself, and little to other people. "We must, to be sure," says A. Kempis, "be in charity with all men; but it is not expedient to be familiar with every one." General and indiscriminate conversation with every one we meet, is a mean and silly thing. Even when we promise ourselves comfort and satisfaction from free conversation, we often return from such interviews with uneasiness; or, at least, have spoken and heard such things as, upon serious reflection, may justly give us concern.

But, if we would secure our tongues and senses, or keep safe our hearts and all the issues of life, we must be frequent at prayer, in the morning, at noon, and at night, or oftener throughout the day, and continually walk as in the presence of God; always remembering that he observes, not only our words and actions, but also takes notice of our most secret thoughts. This is the sum and substance of true piety; for he who is always sensible that that pure and all-seeing eye is continually upon him, will never venture to sin with set purpose or full consent of mind. This sense of the divine presence would certainly make our life on this earth like that of the angels; for according to our Lord's expression, it is their peculiar advantage *continually to behold the face of our Father who is in heaven*. By this means, Joseph escaped the snares laid for him by his imperious mistress; and, as if he had thrown water upon it, extinguished that fiery dart with this seasonable reflection. *Shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* He might have escaped the eyes of men, but he stood in awe of that invisible eye from which nothing can be hid. We read of a good man of old, who got the better of a temptation of the same kind, by the same serious consideration; for, being carried from one chamber to another by the woman that tempted him, he still demanded a place of greater secrecy, till having brought him to the most retired place of the whole house, "Here," said she, "no person will find us out; no eye can see us." To this he answered, "Will no eye see?

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Will not the eye of God perceive us?" By which saying, he himself escaped the snare, and, by the influence of divine grace, brought the sinful woman to repentance.

Let us pray.

Praise waits for thee, O Lord, in Zion; and to be employed in paying thee that tribute, is becoming and pleasant exercise. It is due to thee from all the works of thy hands, but particularly from thy saints and celestial spirits. Elevate, O Lord, our minds, that they may not grovel on the earth and plunge themselves in the mire, but, being carried upwards, may taste the pleasures of thy house, that exalted house of thine, the inhabitants whereof are continually singing thy praises. Their praises add nothing to thee, but they themselves are perfectly happy therein, while they behold thy boundless goodness without any vail, admire thy uncreated beauty, and celebrate the praises thereof throughout all ages. Grant us, that we may walk in the paths of holiness, and, according to our measure, exalt thy name even on this earth, until we also be translated into the glorious assembly of those who serve thee in thy higher house.

Remember thy goodness and thy covenant to thy church militant upon this earth, and exposed to dangers amidst so many enemies; yet we believe that, notwithstanding all these dangers, it will be safe at last. It may be distressed and plunged in the waters, but it cannot be quite overwhelmed or finally perish. Pour out thy blessing upon this our nation, our city, and university. We depend upon thee, O Father, without whose hand we should not have been, and without whose favour we can never be happy. Inspire our hearts with gladness, thou who alone art the fountain of solid, pure, and permanent joy; and lead us, by the paths of righteousness and grace, to the rest and light of glory, for the sake of thy Son, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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LECTURE XXIII.

Of Purity of Life.

In every act of religious worship, what a great advantage would it be to remember that saying of our great master, which nobody is altogether ignorant of, and yet scarcely any know as they ought, that *God*, whom we worship, *is a spirit*, and therefore to be worshiped *in spirit and in truth*. He is a spirit, a most pure spirit, and the Father of spirits. He is truth, primitive truth, and the most pure fountain of all truth. But we all have erred in heart. We are indeed spirits, but spirits immersed in flesh, nay, as it were, converted into flesh, and, the light of truth being extinguished within us, quite involved in the darkness of error: and what still sets us in greater opposition to the truth, every thing about us is false and delusive; there is no soundness in us. How improper therefore are we, who are deceitful and carnal, to worship that Spirit of supreme truth! Though we pray and fast often, yet all our sacrifices, as they are polluted by the impure hands wherewith we offer them, must be offensive and unacceptable to God; and the more they are multiplied, the more the pure and spotless Deity must complain of them, as the grievance is thereby enhanced. Thus, by his prophet, he complained of his people of old. *Your new moons and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them:* therefore, when *ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you*, and, as it were, turn my back upon you with disdain: but if you will *wash you, and make you clean*, then *come and let us reason together;* as if he had said—"Then let us converse together, and if there be any difference between us, let us talk over the matter, and settle it in a friendly manner, that our complaints may be turned into mutual embraces, and all your sins being freely and fully forgiven, you may be restored to perfect innocence." *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool:* wash yourselves, and I will also wash you, and most completely wipe away all your stains.

But that we may be the better provided for this useful,

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and altogether necessary exercise of cleansing our hearts and ways, and apply it with the greater vigour, let us dwell a little upon that sacred expression in the Psalms, *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?* The answer is, *By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

In this question, several things offer themselves to our observation.

1. That without controversy purity of life or conversation is a most beautiful and desirable attainment, and that it must, by all means, begin at the very fountain, that is, the heart; whence, as Solomon observes *proceed the issues of life.* In the beginning of the Psalm, they are pronounced blessed, who are pure or *undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.* And, in another place, *Truly God is good to Israel,* says the psalmist, *even to such as are of a clean heart.* And the words of our Saviour to this purpose are, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* Nor is the true and genuine beauty of the soul any thing distinct from this purity and sanctity; this is the true image of its great Creator; that golden crown, which most unhappily dropped off the head of man, when he fell: so that, with the greatest justice, we may lament and say, "Woe unto us that we have sinned." And it is the general design and intention of all religion, and of all its mysteries and all its precepts, that this crown may be again restored, at least, to some part of the human race, and this image again stamped upon them; which image, when fully completed and for ever confirmed, will certainly constitute a great part of that happiness we now hope for and aspire after. Then, we trust, we shall attain to a more full conformity and resemblance to our beloved Head. And even in this wayfaring state, the more deeply and thoroughly our souls are tinctured with the divine flame of charity, joined with this beautiful purity, the more we resemble him who is *white and ruddy, and fairer than the sons of men.* The Father of mercies has made choice of us, that we may be holy; the Son of God, blessed for ever, has once for all shed his blood upon earth in order to purify us, and daily pours out his Spirit from heaven upon us for the same purpose.

But to consider the matter as it is in itself—where is the person that does not, even by the force of natural

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instinct, disdain filth and nastiness, or at least prefer to it purity and neatness of body? Now, as the soul greatly excels the body, so much the more desirable is it, that it should be found in a state of beauty and purity. In like manner, were we to travel a journey, who would not prefer a plain and clean way to one that is rough and dirty? But the way of life, which is not the case in other matters, will be altogether such as you would have it or choose to make it. With God's assistance and the influence of his grace, a good man is at pains to purify his own way; but men of an impure and beastly disposition, who delight to wallow in the mire, may always easily obtain their sordid wish. But I hope that you, disdaining such a brutish indignity, will, in preference to every thing else, give your most serious attention to this inquiry—by what means even young men may purify their way, and, avoiding the dirty paths of the common sort of mankind, walk in such as are more pleasant and agreeable.

2. Observe that purity is not such an easy matter that it may fall by chance in the way of those that are not in quest of it, but a work of great art and industry. Hence you may also learn, that the way even of young men stands very much in need of this careful attention. It is indeed true, that, in some respect, the reformation of youth is easier and sooner accomplished, in that they are not accustomed to shameful and wicked ways nor confirmed in sinful habits; but there are other respects wherein it is more difficult to reduce that period of life to purity, particularly as it is more strongly impressed with the outward objects that surround it, and easily disposed to imbibe the very worst vices; the examples and incitements to vice beset youth in greater abundance, and those of that age are more apt to fall in with them.

But, whatever may be said of the easiness or difficulty of reforming youth and childhood, it is evident from this question, which, without doubt, is proposed with wisdom and seriousness, that this matter is within the verge of possibility, and of the number of such as are fit to be attempted. Youth is not so headstrong, nor childhood so foolish, but by proper means they can be bent and formed to virtue and piety. Notwithstanding the irregular desires and forwardness of youth, and that madness whereby

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they are hurried to forbidden enjoyments, there are words and expressions that can sooth this impetuosity, even such, that by them youth can tame and compose itself; *by taking heed to its ways*, according to thy word, that matchless word, which contains all those particular words and expressions, not only that are proper to purify and quiet all the motions and affections of the soul, but also, by a certain divine power, are wonderfully efficacious for that purpose. And what was said of old concerning Sparta and its discipline, may be, with much greater truth, asserted of the divine law and true religion, that it had a surprising power to tame and subdue mankind. And this leads us directly to the answer of the question in the text; *By taking heed thereto, according to thy word.*

This is not, therefore, to be done according to our philosophy, but *according to thy word*, O eternal Light, Truth, and Purity! The philosophy of the heathens, it is true, contains some moral instructions and precepts that are by no means despicable; but this is only so far as they are agreeable to the word of God and the divine law, though the philosophers themselves knew nothing of it. But the only perfect system of moral philosophy, that ought to be universally received, is the doctrine of Christianity. This the ancient fathers of the primitive Church have asserted and fully proved, to the honour of our religion. But those who spend their lives in the study of philosophy can neither reform themselves nor others, if nature be but a little obstinate; and their wisdom, when it does its utmost, rather conceals vices than eradicates them: but the divine precepts make so great a change upon the man, and, subduing his old habits, so reform him, that you would not know him to be the same. If any of you then aspire to this purity of mind and way, you must, with all possible care, conform yourselves, and every thing about you, to the instructions and precepts of this divine word. Nor think this a hard saying; for the study of purity has nothing in it that is unpleasant or disagreeable, unless you think it a grievance to become like unto God.

Consider now wherein consists that true wisdom which deserves to be pursued with the most earnest study and application, and whereby, if you will, you may far exceed those that are your superiors in years. Be ambitious to

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attain the advantage mentioned in the text, and consequently the condition upon which it depends, for they are inseparably connected. Reconcile your minds to a strict attention to your ways, according to the divine word; and by this means, which is a very rare attainment, you will reconcile youth and even childhood to the purity here recommended. Account the divine word and precepts preferable to your daily food: yea, let them be dearer to you than your eyes, and even than life itself.

LECTURE XXIV.

Exhortation before the Communion.

It is the advice of the wise man, "Dwell at home," or, with yourself; and though there are very few that do this, yet it is surprising that the greatest part of mankind cannot be prevailed upon at least to visit themselves sometimes; but, according to the saying of the wise Solomon, *the eyes of the fool are in the ends of the earth.* It is the peculiar property of the human mind and its signal privilege, to reflect upon itself; yet we, foolishly neglecting this most valuable gift conferred upon us by our Creator, and the great ornament of our nature, spend our lives in a brutish thoughtlessness. Were a man not only to turn in upon himself carefully to search and examine his own heart, and daily endeavour to improve it more and more in purity, but also to excite others with whom he conversed to this laudable practice, by reasonable advice and affecting exhortations, he would certainly think himself very happy in these exercises. Now, though this expedient is never unseasonable, yet it will be particularly proper on such an occasion as this to try it upon yourselves; as you are not ignorant, that it is the great apostolical rule with respect to all who are called to celebrate the divine mysteries, *Let every man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*

I do not here intend a full explication of this mystery, but only to put you in mind, that in order to a saving use and participation thereof, a twofold judgment must of necessity be formed; the first with respect to our own souls, and the other to that of the Lord's body. These

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the apostle considers as closely connected, and therefore expresses both by the same word. The trial we are to make of ourselves is indeed expressed by the word δοκιμάζειν, which signifies to prove or to try, but immediately afterwards he expresses it by judging ourselves; Εἰ γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς διεκρίνομεν, *for if we would judge ourselves:* whereas in the preceding verses, he had mentioned the other judgment to be formed, and expressed it by the same word, διακρίνειν, which signifies to judge or discern; Μὴ διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Κυρίου, *not discerning the Lord's body*. And this is that which renders a vast many unworthy of so great an honour; they approach this heavenly feast without forming a right judgment either of themselves or of it. But that we may form a judgment of ourselves, it is necessary that we first bring ourselves to an impartial trial: and I should certainly much rather advise you to this inward self-examination, and heartily wish I could persuade you to it, than that you should content yourselves with a lifeless trial of your memory, by repeating compositions on this subject.

Consider with yourselves, I pray, and think seriously, what madness, what unaccountable folly it is, to trifle with the majesty of the most high God, and to offer to infinite Wisdom the sacrifices of distraction and folly! Shall we who are but insignificant worms, thus provoke the almighty King to jealousy, as if we were stronger than he, and run our heads, as it were against that Power, the slightest touch whereof would crush us to dust? Do we not know, that the same God who is an enlivening and saving light to all that worship with humble piety, is nevertheless *a consuming fire* to all the impious and profane who pollute his sacrifices with impure hearts and unclean hands? and that those especially who have been employed in his church and in the divine offices, yet have not experienced his influence as a pure and shining light, will unavoidably feel him as a flaming fire? Let his saints rejoice and exult before God, for this he not only allows, but even commands; yet let even those of them who have made the greatest advances in holiness remember, that this holy and spiritual joy is to be joined with holy fear and trembling: nay, the greater progress they have made in holiness, the more deeply will they feel this impressed

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upon their minds, so that they can by no means forget it —"The great eye is over us, let us be afraid." Great is our God and holy: even the angels worship him. Let his saints approach him, but with humility and fear; but, as for the slothful and those that are immersed in guilt, who securely and with pleasure indulge themselves in impure affections, let them not dare to come near. Yet if there are any, let their guilt and pollution be ever so great, who find arising within them a hearty aversion to their own impurity, and an earnest desire after holiness; behold there is opened for you a living and pure fountain, most effectual for cleansing and washing away all sorts of stains, as well as for refreshing languishing and thirsty souls. And he who is the living and never failing fountain of purity and grace encourages, calls, and exhorts you to come to him. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,* &c. And again, *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*

Ask yourselves, therefore, what you would be at, and with what dispositions you come to this most sacred table. Say—Whither art thou going, and what seekest thou, O my soul? For it would be an instance of the most extravagant sloth and folly, to set about a matter of so great importance and so serious, without any end, without the prospect of any advantage, and therefore without any serious turn of mind; or as one doing nothing. Yet this is the case of vast numbers that meet together in divine assemblies, and at this holy sacrament. Is it any wonder, that those should find nothing, who absolutely have nothing in view; and that he who is bound for no harbour, should meet with no favourable wind? They give themselves up to the torrent of custom, and steer not their course to any particular port, but fluctuate and know not whither they are carried; or if they are alarmed with any sting of conscience, it is only a kind of inconsiderate and irregular motion, and reaches no farther than the exterior surface of sacred institutions. But as for you, who, according to the expression of the angels, *seek Jesus, fear not.* You will certainly find him, and in him all things; *for it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* So that in him there is no vacuity, and

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without him nothing else but emptiness and vanity. Let us embrace him therefore with our whole hearts, and on him alone let us depend and rely. Let his death, which we commemorate by this mystery, extinguish in us all worldly affections. May we feel his divine power working us into a conformity to his sacred image; and having our strength as it were renewed by his means, let us travel towards our heavenly country, constantly following him with a resolute and accelerated pace.

The concern of purifying the heart in good earnest, taking proper measures for conforming the life to the rules of the gospel, is equally incumbent upon all; for this is the great and true design of all divine worship and of all religious institutions; though the greater part of mankind satisfy themselves with the outward surface of them, and therefore catch nothing but shadows in religion itself, as well as in the other concerns of life. We have public prayers and solemn sacraments; yet if amidst all these one should look for the true and lively characters of Christian faith, or in the vast numbers that attend these institutions he should search for those that, in the course of their lives, approve themselves the true followers of their great Master, he would find reason to compare them to a few persons, swimming at a great distance from one another in a vast ocean.

It has been observed long ago by one, that "in Rome itself he had found nothing of Rome;" which with too great truth might be applied to religion, about which we make so great a bustle at present; there is scarcely any thing at all of religion in it, unless we imagine that religion consists of words, as a grove does of trees. For, if we suppose it lies in the mortification of sin, unfeigned humility, brotherly charity, and a noble contempt of the world and the flesh, whither has it gone and left us? As for you, if you would apply to this matter in good earnest, you must of necessity bestow some time and pains upon it, and not fondly dream that such great advantages can be met with by chance, or in consequence of a negligent and superficial inquiry. If we are to alter the course of our life for the time to come, we must look narrowly into our conduct during the preceding part of it; for the measures to be taken for the future are, in a great degree,

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suggested by what is past. He acts wisely and is a happy man, who frequently, nay, daily reviews his words and actions; because he will doubtless perform the same duty with greater ease and to better purpose, when he is called to it with more than ordinary solemnity. And, therefore, they who have experienced how pleasant this work is and what a mixture of utility is joined with this pleasure, will apply to it with a cheerful mind, whenever opportunity requires it. As to others they must of necessity set about it some time or other; I say of necessity, if I am allowed to say it is necessary to avoid the wrath to come and to obtain peace and salvation. Repentance may possibly appear a laborious and unpleasant work to our indolence, and to repent may seem a harsh expression: to perish, however, is still more harsh; but a sinful man has no other choice. Our Lord, who is truth itself, being acquainted with the cruel execution performed by Herod upon the Galileans, takes this opportunity to declare to his hearers, that, *unless they repented, they should all likewise perish.* The Saviour of the world, it is true, came for this very purpose, that he might save those that were miserable and lost from the fatal necessity of being utterly undone, but he never intended to take away the happy and pleasant necessity of repentance: nay, he strengthened the obligation to it, and imposed it as a duty inseparably connected with grace and happiness. And this connexion he not only preached in expressions to the same purpose with his forerunner John the Baptist, but even in the very same words: *Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* And in another place, having told us, that he came *not to call the righteous but sinners*, he immediately adds, to what he called those sinners; not to a liberty of indulging themselves in sin, but from sin *to repentance.* His blood which was shed on the cross is indeed a balsam more precious than all the balm of Gilead and Arabia, and all the ointments of the whole world, but it is solely intended for curing the contrite in heart.

But, alas! that gross ignorance of God that overclouds our mind, is the great and the unhappy cause of all the guilt we have contracted, and of that impenitence which engages us to continue in it. Had men but the least knowledge how disagreeable and hateful all sinful pollu-

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tion renders us to his eternal and infinite purity, and on the other hand, what a likeness to him we attain by holiness, and how amiable we are thereby rendered in his sight, they would look upon this as the only valuable attainment, they would pursue it with the most vigorous efforts of their minds, and would make it their constant study day and night, that according to the divine advice of the apostle, being *cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*, they might *perfect holiness in the fear of God*.

AN

EXHORTATION TO THE STUDENTS,

UPON THEIR RETURN TO THE UNIVERSITY AFTER THE VACATION.

We are at last returned, and some are for the first time brought hither by that supreme Hand which holds the reins of this vast universe, which rules the stormy winds and swelling sea, and distributes peace and war to nations according to its pleasure. The great Lord of the universe and Father of mankind, while he rules the world with absolute sway, does not despise this little flock, provided we look up unto him and humbly pray that we may feel the favourable effects of his presence and bounty: nay, he will not disdain to dwell within us and in our hearts, unless we, through folly, and ignorance of our true happiness, shut the door against him when he offers to come in. He is the Most High, yet he has chosen the humble heart for the most agreeable place of his residence on this earth: but the proud and haughty, who look with disdain on their inferiors, he, on his part, despises, and *beholds*, as it were, *afar off*. He is most holy, and dwells in no hearts but such as are purged from the dross of earthly affections; and that these may be holy and really capable of receiving his sacred Majesty, they must of necessity be purified. *Know ye not*, says the divine apostle, *that you*, even your bodies, *are the temples of the Holy Ghost*, and therefore are to be preserved pure and holy? But the mind that dwells within them must be still more holy, as being the

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priest that, with constant and unwearied piety, offers up the sacrifices and sweet incense of pious affections, cheerful obedience, ardent prayers, and divine praises, to the Deity of that temple.

Of your studies and classical learning, I intend not to say much. The knowledge, I own, that men of letters, who are the most indefatigable in study and have the advantage of the greatest abilities, can possibly attain to is at best but very small. But since the knowledge of languages and sciences, however inconsiderable it may be, is the business of this society of ours and of that period of years you are to pass here, let us do, I pray, as the Hebrews express it, the work of the day while the day lasts; "for time slips silently away, and every succeeding hour is attended with greater disadvantages than that which went before it."

Study to acquire such a philosophy as is not barren and babbling, but solid and true; not such a one as floats upon the surface of endless verbal controversies, but one that enters into the nature of things; for he spoke good sense, who said, "The philosophy of the Greeks was a mere jargon and noise of words."

You who are engaged in philosophical inquiries ought to remember in the mean while, that you are not so strictly confined to that study, but that you may, at the same time, become proficients in elocution; and indeed it is proper you should. I would therefore have you to apply to both these studies with equal attention, that so you may not only attain some knowledge of nature, but also be in condition to communicate your sentiments with ease, upon those subjects you understand, and clothe your thoughts with words and expressions; without which all your knowledge will differ but very little from buried ignorance.

In joining these two studies together, you have not only reason for your guide, but also Aristotle himself for your example; for we are told that it was his custom to walk up and down in the school in the morning teaching philosophy, particularly those speculative and more obscure points which in that age were called rationes acroamaticæ; and thus he was employed till the hour appointed for anointing and going to exercise; but, after dinner, he

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applied to the more entertaining arts of persuasion, and made his scholars declaim upon such subjects as he appointed them.

But to return to my own province, for, to say the truth, I reckon all other things foreign to my purpose—whatever you do with regard to other studies, give always the preference to sacred Christian philosophy, which is indeed the chief philosophy, and has the preeminence over every other science, because it holds Christ to be *the head in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid.* This the apostle tells us, was not the case of those false Christians in his time, whose philosophy regarded only some idle superstitions and vain observations. Cultivate therefore, I say, this sacred wisdom sent down from heaven. Let this be your main study; for its mysteries are the most profound, its precepts the most pure, and, at the same time the most pleasant. In this study, a weak understanding will be no disadvantage, if you have but a willing mind and ardent desires. Here, if any where, the observation holds, that if you love learning you cannot fail to make great progress therein; for some who have applied with great industry to human philosophy, have found it to be like a disdainful mistress, and lost their labour; but divine philosophy invites and encourages even those of the meanest parts.

And indeed it may be no small comfort and relief to young men of slow capacities, who make but little progress in human sciences, even when they apply to them with the most excessive labour and diligence, that this heavenly doctrine, though it be the most exalted in its own nature, is not only accessible to those of the lowest and meanest parts, but they are cheerfully admitted to it, graciously received, preferred to those that are proud of their learning, and very often advanced to higher degrees of knowledge therein; according to that saying of the psalmist, *The law of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The entrance of his word giveth light; it giveth also understanding unto the simple.* You therefore, whom some very forward youths leave far behind in other studies, take courage; and to wipe off this stain if it be one, and compensate this discouragement, make this your refuge: you cannot possibly arrive at an equal pitch of eloquence

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or philosophy with some others, but what hinders you, I pray, from being as pious, as modest, as meek and humble, as holy and pure in heart, as any other person whatever? And by this means in a very short time, you will be completely happy in the enjoyment of God, and live for ever in the blessed society of angels and spirits of just men made perfect.

But if you want to make a happy progress in this wisdom, you must declare war against all the lusts of the world and the flesh, which enervate your minds, weaken your strength, and deprive you of all disposition and fitness for imbibing this pure and immaculate doctrine. How stupid is it to catch so greedily at advantages so vanishing and fleeting in their nature, if indeed they can be called advantages at all; advantages that are carried hither and thither, hurried from place to place by the uncertainty of their nature, and often fly away before they can be possessed. An author, remarkable for his attainments in religion, justly cries out, "O what peace and tranquillity might he possess, who could be prevailed upon to cut off all vain anxiety, and only think of those things that are of a divine and saving nature!" Peace and tranquillity is, without doubt, what we all seek after, yet there are very few that know the way to it, though it be quite plain and open. It is indeed no wonder that the blind, who wander about without a guide, should mistake the plainest and most open path; but we have an infallible guide and a most valiant leader. Let us follow him alone; for he that treadeth in his steps can never walk in darkness.

Let us pray.

O invisible God, who seest all things; eternal Light, before whom all darkness is light, and in comparison with whom, every other light is but darkness; the weak eyes of our understanding cannot bear the open and full rays of thy inaccessible light; and yet without some glimpses of that light from heaven, we can never direct our steps, nor proceed toward that country which is the habitation of light. May it therefore please thee, O Father of Lights, to send forth thy light and thy truth, that they may lead us directly to thy holy mountain. Thou art good and

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the fountain of goodness; give us understanding, that we may keep thy precepts. That part of our past lives, which we have lost in pursuing shadows, is enough and indeed too much: bring back our souls into the path of life, and let the wonderful sweetness thereof, which far exceeds all the pleasures of this earth, powerfully yet pleasantly preserve us from being drawn aside therefrom by any temptation from sin or the world. Purify, we pray thee, our souls from all impure imaginations, that thy most beautiful and holy image may be again renewed within us, and by contemplating thy glorious perfections, we may feel daily improved within us that divine similitude, the perfection whereof, we hope, will at last make us for ever happy in that full and beatific vision we aspire after. Till this most blessed day break, and the shadows fly away, let thy Spirit be continually with us, and may we feel the powerful effects of his divine grace constantly directing and supporting our steps; that all our endeavours, not only in this society, but throughout the whole remaining part of our lives, may serve to promote the honour of thy blessed name, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen.*

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EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

BY

ROBERT LEIGHTON, D. D.

ARCHBISHOP OF GLASGOW.

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EXPOSITORY LECTURES.

PSALM XXXIX.

LECTURE I.

Ver. 1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.*

CERTAINLY it is a high dignity that is conferred upon man that he may as freely and frequently as he will, converse with him who made him, the great King of heaven and earth. It is indeed a wonder that God should honour poor creatures so much; but it is no less strange, that men having so great privileges, the most part of them do use them so little. Seldom do we come to him in times of ease. And when we are spurred to it by afflictions and pains, commonly we try all other means rather than this, which is the alone true and unfailing comfort. But such as have learned this way of laying their pained head and heart in his bosom, they are truly happy, though in the world's language they be never so miserable.

This is the recourse of this holy man in the time of his affliction, whatever it was,—prayer and tears, bemoaning himself before his God and Father, and that the more fervently in that he finds his speaking to men so unprofitable; and therefore he refrains from it.

The Psalm consists of two parts—his silence to men and his speech to God; and both of them are set with such sweet notes of music, though they be sad, that they deserve well to be committed *to the chief musician.*

I said, I will take heed to my ways. It was to himself that he said it; and it is impossible for any other to prove a good or a wise man, without much of this kind of speech

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to himself. It is one of the most excellent and distinguishing faculties of a reasonable creature; much beyond vocal speech, for in that some birds may imitate us; but neither bird nor beast has any thing of this kind of language, of reflecting or discoursing with itself. It is a wonderful brutality in the greatest part of men, that they are so little conversant in this kind of speech, being framed and disposed for it. It is not only of itself excellent, but of continual use and advantage. But it is a common evil among men to go abroad and out of themselves, which is a madness and a true distraction. It is true, a man hath need of a well set mind, when he speaks to himself; for otherwise he may be worse company to himself, than if he were with others. But he ought to endeavour to have a better with him, to call in God to his heart to dwell with him. If thus we did, we should find how sweet this were to speak to ourselves, by now and then intermixing our speech with discourses unto God. For want of this, the most part not only lose their time in vanity, in their converse abroad with others, but do carry in heaps of that vanity to the stock which is in their own hearts, and do converse with that in secret, which is the greatest and the deepest folly in the world.

Other solitary employments, as reading the disputes and controversies that are among men, are things not unuseful; yet all turns to waste, if we read not our own heart, and study that. This is the study of every holy man, and between this and the consideration of God, he spends his hours and endeavours. Some have recommended the reading of men more than books; but what is in the one or in both of them, or in all the world beside, without this? A man will find himself out of his proper business, if he acquaint not himself with this, to speak much with God and with himself concerning the ordering of his own ways.

It is true, that it is necessary for some men, in some particular charges and stations, to regard the ways of others; and besides, something also there may be of a wise observing of others, to improve the good and the evil we see in them to our own advantage and the bettering of our own ways, looking on them to make the repercussion the stronger on ourselves; but except it be

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out of charity and wisdom, it flows either from uncharitable malice, or else a curious and vain spirit, to look much and narrowly into the ways of others, and to know the manner of living of persons about us, and so to know every thing but ourselves; like travellers, that are well acquainted with foreign and remote parts, but strangers in the affairs of their own country at home. The check that Christ gave to Peter is due to such, *What is that to thee? Follow thou me.* Look thou to thine own feet, that they be set in the right way. It is a strange thing, that men should lay out their diligence abroad to their loss, when their pains might be bestowed to their advantage nearer at hand, at home within themselves.

This that the psalmist here speaks of, *taking heed to his ways*, as it imports his present diligence, so also it hath in it a reflection on his ways past, and these two do mutually assist one another. He shall never regulate his ways before him, who has not wisely considered his ways past; for there is wisdom gathered from the observation of what is gone, to the choosing where to walk in time to come, to see where he is weakest and lies exposed to the greatest hazard, and there to guard. Thus David expresses it in another psalm; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.* And this should be done not only in the great change of one's first conversion from sin, but this double observance must be still continued every day; a man should be looking to his rule, and laying that rule to his way, and observing where the balk and nonconformity to the rule is, and renewing his repentance for that, and amending it the next day, that still the present day may be the better for yesterday's error.

And surely there is much need of this, if we consider how we are encompassed about with hazards and snares, and a variety of temptations; and how little we have either of strength to overcome or of wisdom to avoid them; especially they being secretly set and unseen (which makes them the more dangerous) every where in the way in which we must walk, and even in those ways where we least think. Every where does the enemy of our souls lay traps and snares for us; in our table, in our bed, in our company, and alone. If the heart be earthly and

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carnal, there is the snare of riches and gains; or pleasures present to think upon; and if it delight in spiritual things, that walk is not exempted neither; there are snares of doubtings, presumption, and pride. And in the converse of one Christian with another, where spiritual affection hath been stirred, it turns often to carnal passions; as the apostle says of the Galatians, they *begin in the Spirit*, and *end in the flesh*.

This observing and watching, as it is a needful, so it is a very delightful thing, though it will be hard and painful to the inexperienced. To have a man's actions and words continually curbed, so that he cannot speak or do what he would—these are fetters and bonds; yet, to those that know it, it is a pleasure to gain experience, and to be more skilled in preventing the surprises of our enemies, and upon that to have something added to our own art, and to be more able to resist upon new occasions, and to find ourselves every day outstripping ourselves. That is the sweetest life in the world, for the soul to be dressing itself for the espousals of the great King, putting on more of the ornaments and beauties of holiness. That is our glory, *to be made conformable to the image of God and of Jesus Christ*. If an image had sense, it would desire nothing so much as to look on the original whence it received its name, and to become more and more like it: so it is the pleasure of renewed souls, to be looking on him, and to be growing daily more like him, whose living image they are, and to be fitting themselves for that day of glory, wherein they shall be like him in the perfection they are capable of. And this makes death more pleasant than life to the believer. That which seems so bitter to the most of men, is sweetened to them most wonderfully. The continual observance of a man's ways, the keeping a watch continually over them—this casts a light upon the dark passage of death, which is at the end of that walk, and conveys him through to the fulness of life; so that the man who observes himself and his ways through life, hath little to do in examining them when he comes to die. It is a piece of strange folly, that we defer the whole, or a great part of our day's work, to the twilight of the evening, and are so cruel to ourselves, as to keep the great load of our life for a few hours or days, and for a pained

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sickly body. He who makes it his daily work to observe his ways is not astonished when that day comes, which long before was familiar to him every day.

That I sin not with my tongue. It is the wise man's advice, *Keep thy heart with all diligence*, or, *above all keeping;* and he gives the satisfying reason for it, *for out of it are the issues of life.* Such as the spring is, so will the streams be. The heart is the spring whence all the natural life and vital spirits flow through the body; and, in the scripture sense, it is the spring of all our actions and conversation; for it sends out emissaries through all—through the eye, the hand, and all the senses and organs of the body, but through none more constantly and abundantly than the tongue; and therefore Solomon, after these words, immediately adds, *Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee.* The current of the heart runs in that channel; for it is the organ of societies, and is commonly employed in all the converse of men. And we can still, when all the other members are useless, use our tongues in regretting their unfitness for their offices; as sick and old persons are wont to do. Thus David here, as it seems under some bodily sickness, labours to refrain his tongue, and lest it should prove too strong for him, he puts a curb upon it. Though it did not free him from inward frettings of his heart, yet he lays a restraint upon his tongue to stay the progress of sin, that grows in vigour by going out, and produces and begets sin of the same kind in the hearts and mouths of others, when it passes from the heart to the tongue. The apostle James does amply and excellently teach the great importance of ordering the tongue in all a Christian's life. But we are ever learning and never taught. We hear how excellent a guard this is to our lives, to keep a watch over our tongue; but, I fear, few of us gain the real advantage of this rule. We are far from the serious thoughts that a religious person had of this scripture, who, when he heard it read, withdrew himself for many years to the study of this precept, and made very good proficiency in it.

In all the disorders of the world, the tongue hath a great share. To let pass those irruptions of infernal furies, blasphemies and cursing, lying and uncharitable speeches, how much have we to account for, for unprofitable talk-

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ing! It is a lamentable thing that there is nothing, for the most part in common entertainments and societies of men together, but refuse and trash; as if their tongues were given them for no other end than to be their shame, by discovering their folly and weakness. So, likewise that of impatient speech in trouble and affliction, which certainly springs from an unmortified spirit, that hath learned nothing of the great lesson of submission to the will of God. But for all the disorders of the tongue, the remedy must begin at the heart. Purge the fountain, and then the streams will be clean. *Keep thy heart*, and then it will be easy to keep thy tongue. It is a great help in the quality of speech, to abate in the quantity; not to speak rashly, but to ponder what we are going to say. *Set a watch before the door of thy lips.* He bids us not build it up like a stone wall, that nothing may go in or come out, but he speaks of a door, which may be sometimes open, ofttimes shut, but withal to have a watch standing before it continually. A Christian must labour to have his speech as contracted as can be in the things of this earth; and even in divine things, our words should be few and wary. In speaking of the greatest things, it is a great point of wisdom not to speak much. It was David's resolution, to *keep silence*, especially *before the wicked*, who came to visit him probably when he was sick. While they were there, he *held a watch before his lips*, to speak nothing of God's hand on him, lest they should have mistaken him. And a man may have some thoughts of divine things, that it were very impertinent to speak out indifferently to all sorts even of good persons. This is a talkative age, and people contract a faculty to speak much in matters of religion, though their words for the most part be only the productions of their own brain; little of these things being in their hearts. Surely speeches of this kind are as bad as any, when holy things are spoken of with a notional freedom, where there is nothing but empty words. They who take themselves to solitude choose the best and easiest part, if they have a warrant so to do; for this world is a tempestuous sea, in which there are many rocks, and a great difficulty it is to steer this little helm aright amidst them. However, the apostle James makes it a great character of a Christian's perfection, *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect*

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man. But where is that man? Seeing we find men generally and most of all ourselves, so far from this, it cannot choose but work this—to stir up ardent desires in us to be removed to that blessed society, where there shall be never a word amiss, nor a word too much.

LECTURE II.

Ver. 2. *I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.*

3. *My heart was hot within me; while I was musing, the fire burned; then spake I with my tongue.*

4. *Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.*

5. *Behold thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity. Selah.*

It is a very useful and profitable thing to observe the motions and deportments of the spirits of wise and holy men, in all the various postures and conditions they are in. It is for that purpose they are drawn out to us in the scriptures. There are some graces that are more proper and come more in action in times of ease and prosperity, such as temperance, moderation of mind, humility, and compassion. Others are more proper for times of distress —as faith, fortitude, patience, and resignation. It is very expedient, if not necessary, that affliction have its turns, and frequently, in the lives of the children of God: it is the tempest that gives evidence of the pilot's skill. And as the Lord delighteth in all his works, looks on the frame and conduct of all things with pleasure, so he is delighted to look on this part, on this low sea of troubles, to see his champions meet with hard and pressing trials, such as sometimes do not only make them feel them, but do often make the conflict dubious to them, so that they seem to be almost foiled, yet do they acquit themselves, and come off with honour. It is not the excellency of grace to be insensible in trouble, as some philosophers would have their wise men, but to overcome and be victorious.

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Among the rest of this holy man's troubles, this was one, that the wicked did reproach him. This is a sharp arrow, that flies thick in the world. It is one of the sharpest stings of poverty, that as it is pinched with wants at home, so it is met with scorn abroad. It is reckoned among the sharp sufferings of holy men, that they suffered cruel *mockings*. Now, men commonly return these in the same kind, that is, by the tongue, whereof David is here aware. He refrains himself even *from good;* not only from his just defence, but even from good and pious discourse. We do so easily exceed in our words, that it is better sometimes to be wholly silent, than to speak that which is good; for our good borders so near upon evil, and so easy is the transition from the one to the other, that though we begin to speak of God and good things with a good intention, yet how quickly run we into another channel! Passion and self, having stolen in, turn us quite from the first design of our speech; and this chiefly in disputes and debates about religion, wherein though we begin with zeal for God, yet ofttimes, in the end, we testify nothing but our own passion; and sometimes we do lie one against another in defence of what we call the truth.

It cannot be denied, that to a holy heart, it is a great violence to be shut up altogether from the speech of God. It burns within, especially in the time of affliction, as was the case of Jeremiah: *Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name: but his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and could not stay.* So is it here with David; therefore he breaks out: the fire burns upward, and he speaks to God.

Let this be our way when we cannot find ease among men, to seek it in God. He knows the language of his children, and will not mistake it; yea, where there may be somewhat of weakness and distemper, he will bear with it. In all your distresses, in all your moanings, go to him, pour out your tears to him. Not only fire, but even water, where it wants a vent, will break upward. These tears drop not in our own lap, but they fall on his, and he hath a bottle to put them in. If ye empty them there, they shall return in wine of strong consolation.

Now David's request is, *Lord, make me to know mine*

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end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am; in which he does not desire a response from God about the day of his death, but instruction concerning the frailty and shortness of his life. But did not David know this? Yes, he knew it, and yet he desires to know it. It is very fit we should ask of God that he would make us to know the things that we do know; I mean, that what we know emptily and barely, we may know spiritually and fruitfully, and if there be any measure of this knowledge, that it may increase and grow more. We know that we are sinners, but that knowledge commonly produces nothing but cold, dry, and senseless confusion; but the right knowledge of sin would prick our hearts, and cause us to pour them out before the Lord. We know that Jesus is the Saviour of sinners; it were fit to pray that we might know more of him, so much of him as might make us shape and fashion our hearts to his likeness. We know we must die, and that it is no long course to the utmost period of life, yet our hearts are little instructed by this knowledge. How great need have we to pray this prayer with David here, or that with Moses, *Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!* Did we indeed know and consider how quickly we shall pass from hence, it were not possible for us to cleave so fast to the things of this life, and, as foolish children, to wade in ditches and fill our laps with mire and dirt; to prefer base earth and flesh to immortality and glory.

That I may know how frail I am. Most part of men are foolish, inconsiderate creatures; *like unto the very beasts that perish,* only they are capable of greater vanity and misery; but in as irrational a way, they toil on and hurry themselves in a multitude of business, by multitudes of desires, fears, and hopes, and know not whither all tends. But one well advised thought of this one thing would temper them in their hottest pursuits, if they would but think how frail they are, how vain a passing thing not only these their particular desires and projects are, but they themselves and their whole life.

David prays that he may *know his end,* and his prayer is answered; *Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.* If we were more in requests of this kind, we should

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receive more speedy and certain answers. If this be our request, to know ourselves, our frailties and vanity, we shall know that our *days are few and evil*, know both the brevity and vanity of them.

Thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth. This is one of the shortest measures. We need not long lines to measure our lives by. Each one carries a measure about with him, his own hand; that is the longest and fullest measure. It is not so much as a span; that might possibly have been the measure of old age in the infancy of the world, but now it is contracted to a hand-breadth, and that is the longest. But how many fall short of that! Many attain not a finger-breadth; multitudes pass from the womb to the grave; and how many end their course within the compass of childhood!

Whether we take this hand-breadth for the fourscore years that are ordinarily the utmost extent of man's life in our days, or for the four periods of our age which we use to distinguish it, childhood, youth, manhood, and old age, there are great numbers we see take up their lodging ere they come near the last of any of these, and few attain to the outmost border of them. All of us are but a hand-breadth from death, and not so much; for many of us have passed a great part of that hand-breadth already, and we know not how little of it is behind. We use commonly to divide our lives by years, months, weeks and days, but it is all but one day; there is the morning, noon, afternoon, and evening. Man is as the grass that springs in the morning. As for all the days that are passed of our life, death hath them rather than we, and they are already in its possession. When we look back on them, they appear but as a shadow or dream; and if they be so to us, how much more short are they in the sight of God! So says David here—When I look on thee and thy eternity, *mine age is as nothing before thee.* What is our life, being compared to God, before whom *a thousand years are but as one day?* Nay, it is less—*like yesterday when it is past*, and that is but a thought. The whole duration of the world is but a point in respect of eternity; and how small a point is the life of man, even in comparison with that!

The brevity of our life is a very useful consideration. From it we may learn patience under all our crosses and

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troubles. They may be shorter than life, but they can be no longer. There are few whom an affliction hath lain on all the days of their life; but though that were the case, yet a little time, and how quickly is it done! While thou art asleep, there is a cessation of thy trouble; and when awake, bemoaning and weeping for it and for sin that is the cause of it, in the mean time it is sliding away. In all the bitter blasts that blow on thy face, thou who art a Christian indeed mayst comfort thyself in the thought of the good lodging that is before thee. To others, it were the greatest comfort, that their afflictions in this life were lengthened out to eternity.

This may teach us likewise temperance in those things that are called *the good things of this world.* Though a man had a lease of all the fine things the world can afford for his whole life, which yet never any man that I know of had, what is it? A feigned dream of an hour long. None of those things, that it now takes so much delight in, will accompany the cold lump of clay to the grave. Within a little while, those that are married and rejoice will be *as if they rejoiced not*, as if they never had done it; and since they will be so quickly over, a wise man makes little difference, in these things, betwixt their presence and their absence.

This thought should also teach us diligence in our business. We have a short day and much to do; it were fit to be up early; *to remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* And ye that are come to riper years, be advised to lay hold on what remains; ye know not how little it is.

The more you fill yourselves with the things of this life, the less desire you will have after *those rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand.* These will never run dry, but all those other things will be dried up within a little space; at the furthest, when old age and death come, if not sooner. And on the other side, the more we deny ourselves the sensual enjoyments of the present world, we grow the liker to that divine estate, and are made the surer of it. And I am sure, all will grant that this is a very gainful exchange.

Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity. It is no wonder that the generality of men are strangers to

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God, for they are strangers to themselves. The cure of both these evils is from the same hand. He alone can teach us what he is, and what we are ourselves. All know and see that their life is short and themselves vanity, but this holy man thought it needful to ask the true notion of it from above, and he receives the measure of his life, even a *hand-breadth*. There is a common imposture among people, to read their fortunes by their hands, but this is true palmistry indeed—to read the shortness of our life upon the palms of our hands.

Our days are not only few, but we ourselves are *vanity*. *Every man*, even a godly man, as he is a partaker of this life, is not exempted from vanity; nay, he knows it better than any other; but this thought comforts him, that he hath begun that life which is above and beyond all vanity. The words are weighty and full. It is not a problem or a doubtful thing, but, *surely, every man is vanity*. I may call it a definition, and so it is proved, Psal. cxliv. 3, 4. *What is man? Man is like to vanity; his days are as a shadow that passeth away*. His days do not only soon decline and pass away as a shadow, but also they are *like to vanity*. While he appears to be something, he is nothing but the figure and picture of vanity. He is like it, not the copy of it, but rather the original and idea of it, for he hath derived vanity to the whole creation: he hath subjected the creatures to it, and hath thrown such a load of it upon them, that they groan under it; and so, vanity agrees to him properly, constantly, and universally; *Every man*, and that *at his best estate*, or, as the word is, in his settled and fixed state. Set him as sure and as high as you will, yet he is not above that; he carries it about with him as he does his nature.

This is a very profitable truth to think on, though some kind of hearers, even of the better sort, would judge it more profitable to hear of cases of conscience. But this is a great case of conscience, to consider it well, and carry the impression of it home with you on your hearts—the extreme vanity of ourselves; that we are nothing but vanity. And the note that is added here, *Selah*, if it import any thing to the sense and confirmation of what it is added to, it agrees well to this; but if it be only a musical note to direct, as some think, the elevation or,

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according to others, the falling of the voice, it fits the sense very well; for you have men here lifted up and cast down again; lifted up—*man at his best estate;* and from that thrown down to nothing—even in that estate, *altogether vanity.* What is that? It is, as the word signifies, an earthly vapour, and it is generally used to signify things of the least and meanest use, the most empty, airy things. Thus idols are often called by that name. They are nothing in respect of what is attributed to them by the children of men. And such a thing is man. He seems to be something, and is indeed nothing: as it is, Psal. lxii. 9; *Men of low degree are vanity*—possibly that may be granted for a truth, and they pass for such, but he adds, *Men of high degree are a lie:* they promise something and look bigger, but they are nothing more, except this, *a lie;* and the greater they are, the louder they lie.

This it is, then, that we should acquaint ourselves with—that man, in this present life, in all the high advantages of it, is an empty, feeble, fading thing. If we look to the frame of man's body, what is he but a muddy wall, a house of clay, *whose foundation is in the dust?* If we look within, there is nothing there but a sink and heap of filth. The body of man is not only subject to fevers, hectics, &c. that make the wall to moulder down, but, take him in his health and strength, what is he but a bag of rottenness? And why should he take delight in his beauty, which is but the appearance of a thing, which a fit of sickness will so easily deface, or the running of a few years spoil the fashion of? A great heat or a cold puts that frame into disorder; a few days' sickness lays him in the dust; or much blood gathered within gathers fevers and pleurisies, and so destroys that life it should maintain; or a fly or a crumb of bread may stop his breath, and so end his days.

If we consider men in societies, in cities and towns, often hath the overflowing scourge of famine and pestilence laid them waste; and from these they cannot secure themselves in their greatest plenty and health, but they come on a sudden and unlooked for. If we could see all the parts and persons in a great city at once; how many woes and miseries should we behold there! How many either want bread, or scarcely have it by hard labour! Then, to hear the groans of dying persons, and the sighs and weep-

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ings of those about them—how many of these things are within the walls of great cities at all times! Great palaces cannot keep out death, but it breaks through and enters there, and thither ofttimes the most painful and shameful diseases, that are incident to the sons of men, resort. Death, by vermin, hath seized on some of the greatest of kings that have ever been in the world. If we look on generals who have commanded the greatest armies, they carry about with them poor frail bodies, as well as others: they may be killed with one small wound, as well as the meanest soldier; and a few days' intemperance hath taken some of the most gallant and courageous of them away in the midst of their success. And, sure I am, he who believes and considers the life to come, and looks on this and sees what it is, makes little account of those things that have so big a sound in the world: the revolutions of states, crowns, kingdoms, cities, towns—how poor, inconsiderable things are they being compared with eternity! And he that looks not on them as such is a fool.

LECTURE III.

Ver. 6. *Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*

THERE is a part of our hand-breadth past since we last left this place, and as we are saying this, we are wearing out some portion of the rest of it. It were well if we consider this, so as to make a better improvement of what remains, than, I believe we shall find, upon examining of our ways, we have made of what is past. Let us see if we can gain the space of an hour, that we may be excited to a better management of the latter part of our time, than we have made of the former.

We are all, I think, convinced of the vanity of man, as to his outside, that he is a feeble, weak, poor creature; but we may have hope of somewhat better in that which is the man indeed, his mind and intellectual part. It is true, that that was originally excellent, and that there is somewhat of a radical excellency still in the soul of man; yet it is so desperately degenerate, that naturally *man*,

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even in that consideration, *is altogether vanity*, in all the pieces of him: his mind is but a heap of vanity, nothing there but ignorance, folly, and disorder. And if we think not so, we are the more foolish and ignorant. That which passes with great pomp under the title of learning and science, is commonly nothing else than a rhapsody of words and empty terms, which have nothing in them to make known the internal nature of things.

But even those persons who have the improvement of learning and education, who understand the model and government of affairs, who see their defects and entertain themselves with various shapes of amending and reforming them, even in them we shall find nothing but a sadder and more serious vanity. It is a tormenting and vexing thing for men to promise to themselves great reformations and bettering of things. That thought usually deludes the wisest of men. They must at length come to that conclusion of Solomon, after much labour to little purpose, that *crooked things cannot be made straight.* Yea, many things grow worse, by labouring to rectify them; therefore he adds, *He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.*

As for knowledge in religion, we see the greatest part of the world lying in gross darkness; and even amongst Christians, how much ignorance is there of these things! It appears in this, that there are such swarms and productions of debates and contentions, that they are grown past number. And each party is confident that truth is on his side; and ordinarily the most ignorant and erroneous are the most confident and most imperious in their determinations. Surely it were a great part of our wisdom to free our spirits from these empty, fruitless janglings, that abound in the Christian world.

It were an endless toil to go through all degrees, professions, and employments of men in the world. We may go through nations, countries, crafts, schools, colleges, courts, camps, councils of states, and parliaments, and find nothing in all these but still more of this trouble and vexation in a finer dress and fashion, *altogether vanity!*

Every man walketh in a vain show. His walk is nothing but a going on in continual vanity, adding a new stock of vanity of his own coining to what he has already within,

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and vexation of spirit woven all along in with it. He walks in an image, as the word is; converses with things of no reality, and which have no solidity in them; and he himself has as little. He himself is a walking image in the midst of these images. They who are taken with the conceit of images and pictures, that is an emblem of their own life and of all other men's also. Every man's fancy is to himself a gallery of pictures, and these he walks up and down, and considers not how vain these are and how vain a thing he himself is.

My brethren, they are happy persons, but few are they in number, who are truly weaned from all those images and fancies the world dotes so much upon. If many of the children of men would turn their thoughts backwards in the evening but of one day, what would they find for the most part, but that they have been walking among these pictures, and passing from one vanity to another, and back again to and fro, to as little purpose as the running up and down of children at their play? He who runs after honour, pleasure, popular esteem—what do you think? Does not that man walk in an image, pursuing after that which hath no other being than what the opinion and fancy of men give to it? especially the last, which is a thing so fluctuating, uncertain, and inconstant, that while he hath it, he hath nothing. The other image that man follows and worships, is that in the text, that wretched madness of *heaping up riches*. This is the great foolishness and disease especially of old age, that the less way a man has to go, he makes the greater provision for it. When the hands are stiff and fit for no other labour, they are fitted and composed for scraping together. But for what end dost thou take all this pains? If for thyself, a little sober care will do thy turn, if thy desires be sober; and if not so, thy diligence were better bestowed in impairing and diminishing of these; that is the easier way a great deal. And if it be for others, why dost thou take a certain unease to thyself for the uncertain ease of others? And who these are, thou dost not know; may be, such as thou didst never intend thy riches for. It were good we used more easy and undistracting diligence for the increasing of those treasures, which we cannot deny are far better; and whosoever hath them may abound therein with in-

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crease. He knows well for whom he gathers them; he himself shall possess them through all eternity.

If there were not a hope beyond this life, there were reason for that passionate word in Psal. lxxxix. 47; *Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?* To what purpose were it for poor wretched man to have been all his days tossed upon the waves of vanity, and then to lie down in the grave, and be no more heard of? But it is not so. He is made capable of a noble and blessed life beyond this; and our forgetfulness of this is the cause of all our misery and vanity here.

It is a great folly to complain of the shortness of our life, and yet to lavish it out so prodigally on trifles and shadows. If it were well managed, it would be sufficient for all we have to do. The only way to live indeed is to be doing service to God and good to men. This is to live much in a little time. But when we play the fool in misspending our time, it may be indeed a sad thought to us, when we find it gone, and we are benighted in the dark so far from our home. But those that have their souls untied from this world and knit to God, they need not complain of the shortness of it, having laid hold on eternal life; for this life is flying away: there is no laying hold on it; and it is no matter how soon it go away; the sooner the better, for to such persons it seems rather to go too slowly.

LECTURE IV.

Ver. 7. *And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee.*

To entertain the minds of men with thoughts of their own vanity and discourses of their own misery, seems to be sad and unpleasant; but certainly it is not unprofitable, unless it be our own choice to make it so, and that were the greatest vanity and misery of all. Indeed, if there were no help for this sore evil, then the common shift were not to be blamed, yea, it were to be chosen as the only help to such a desperate case—not to think on it—to forget our misery, and to divert our thoughts from it by all possible means, rather than to increase it, and tor-

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ment ourselves by insisting and poring on it. And in *this* case, shallow minds would have the advantage, that could not converse with these sad thoughts, for to *increase this knowledge*, were but *to increase sorrow*. But far be it from us thus to determine. There is a hope which is a help to this evil, and this is what this holy man fixes on: *Lord, my hope is in Thee*. Otherwise, it were strange, that the most excellent piece of the visible creation should be made subject to the most incurable unhappiness; to feel misery which he cannot shun, and to be tormented with desires that cannot be satisfied. But there is some better expectation for the souls of men, and it is no other than HIMSELF who made them.

The wisest natural men have discoursed of man's vanity and passionately bemoaned it, but in this they have fallen short, how to remedy it. They have aimed at it and come near it, but have not been able to effect it. They still laboured to be satisfied in themselves. They speak somewhat of reason, but that will not do it; for man being fallen under the curse of God, there is nothing but darkness and folly in himself. The only way to blessedness is by going out of ourselves unto God. All our discourses of our own vanity will but further disquiet us, if they do not determine here; if they do not fix on his eternal happiness, goodness, and verity.

I am persuaded, if many would ask this question of themselves, *What wait I for?* they would puzzle themselves and not find an answer. There are a great many things that men desire and are gaping after, but few seek after one thing chiefly and stayedly. They float up and down, and are carried about without any certain motion, but by fancy and by guess; and no wind can be fair for such persons, who aim at no certain haven.

If we put this question to ourselves, What would I have? it were easy for many to answer—I would have an easy, quiet, peaceable life in this world. So would an ox or a horse. And is that all? May be, you would have a greater height of pleasure and honour. But think on this one thing—there is this one crack and vanity that spoils all these things, that they will not bear you up when you lean on them in times of distress; and besides, when you have them, they may be pulled from you, and if not, you must

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be plucked away from them within a little while. There is much seeming content in the pursuit of these things, but they are lost with greater discontent. It is God's goodness to men to blast all things in the world to them, and to break their fairest hopes, that they may be constrained to look above to himself. He beats them from all shores, that he may *lead them to the Rock that is higher than they*.

O that God would once teach some of your hearts, who are under the chains of darkness, that ye might once bethink where to rest your heads in the midst of all our confusions! And here is the resting place—hope in God. *Now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in Thee.* Blessed soul that can say "Lord, thou seest I desire nothing but thyself;" as Peter said, *Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* "All the corners of my heart stand open in thy sight; thou seest if there be any other desire or expectation but to please thee; and if there be any such thing in me, for I see it not, I pray thee discover it to me, and through thy grace it shall lodge no longer. My heart is thine alone; it is consecrated to thee; and if any thing would profane thy temple, if it will not go forth by fair warning, let it be scourged out by thy rod, yea, by any rod, whatsoever it pleaseth thee to choose."

My hope is in Thee. This holy man, seeing the vanity of all other expectations and pursuits of men, at length runs to this; *My hope is in Thee.* He finds nothing but moving sand every where else; but he finds this eternal Rock to be a strong foundation, as the Hebrew word by which he is styled doth signify. It is true, the union of the heart with God is made up by faith and love; but yet both these, in this our present condition of absence and distance from God, do act themselves much by the third grace which is joined with them, and that is hope. For faith is conversant about things that are not seen, and in a great part, that are not as yet, but are to come; and the spirit of faith, choosing things that are to come, is called hope. It is true, they are not so wholly deferred, as that believers possess nothing; but yet the utmost they possess is but a pledge and earnest penny, a small thing in respect of that eternal inheritance they look for. What they have here is of the same kind with what they expect,

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but it is but a little portion of it—the smiles and glances of their Father's face, foretastes of heaven, which their souls are refreshed with. But these are but rare, and for a short time.

Hope is the great stock of believers. It is that which upholds them under all the faintings and sorrows of their mind in this life, and in their going *through the valley and shadow of death.* It is the *helmet of their salvation,* which, while they are looking over to eternity beyond this present time, covers and keeps their head safe amidst all the darts that fly round about them. In the present discomfort and darkness of mind, and the saddest hours they meet with in this life, hope is that which keeps up the soul; and it is that which David cheered up his soul with; *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.* And even in this point, the children of the world have no great advantage over the children of God as to the things of this life; for much of their satisfaction, such as it is, doth hang for the most part on their hope. The happiest and richest of them do still piece it out with some further expectation, something they look for beyond what they have; and the expectation of that pleases them more than all their present possessions. But this great disadvantage they have, that all their hopes are but heaps of delusions and lies; and either they die and obtain them not, or if they do obtain them, yet they obtain them not; they are so far short of what they fancied and imagined of them beforehand. But the hope of the children of God, as it is without fail sure, so it is inconceivably full and satisfying far beyond what the largest apprehension of any man is able to reach. *Hope in God!* What is wanting there?

This hope lodges only in the pure heart. It is a precious liquor that can be kept only in a clean vessel, and that which is not so cannot receive it, but what it seems to receive, it corrupts and destroys. It is a confidence arising from peace, agreement, and friendship, which cannot subsist between the God of purity and those who allow unholiness in themselves. It is a strange impudence for men to talk of their trust and hope in God, who are in perfect hostility against him. Bold fellows go through

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dangers here, but it will not be so hereafter. *They have turned their back unto me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble they say, Arise and save us:* they do it as confidently as if they never had despised God; but they mistake the matter: it is not so. *Go and cry,* says he, *to the gods whom ye have chosen.* When men come to die, then they catch hold of the mercy of God; but from that their filthy hands are beat off; there is no help for them there; and so they fall down to the pit. A holy fear of God and a happy hope in him are commonly linked together. *Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.*

And even in those who are more purified from sin, yet too large draughts of lawful pleasures do clog the spirits, and make this hope grow exceedingly weak. Surely the more we fill ourselves with these things, we leave the less appetite for the consolations of this blessed hope. They cannot know the excellency of this hope, who labour not to keep it unmixed: it is best alone, as the richest wines and oils, which are the worst of mixtures. *Be sober and hope,* says the apostle Peter; keep your mind sober, and your hope shall be pure. If any thing or person leans on two supporters, whereof the one is whole and sound and the other broken or crooked, that which is unsound will break, though the other remain whole, and that which was propped up by it will fall; whereas the one that was whole had been sufficient. Thus it is when we divide our hopes betwixt God and this present world or any other good. Those who place their whole hopes on God, they gather in all their desires to him; the streams of their affections are not scattered and left in the muddy ditches of the world; they do not fall into stinking pools; but being gathered into one main torrent, they run on in that channel to the sea of his eternal goodness.

My hope is in Thee. We cannot choose but think, that God is immensely good in himself; but that which is nearer, whereon our hearts most rise, is a relative goodness, that he is good to us, and that he is so perfectly and completely good, that having made choice of him, and obtained union with him, we need no more. Were once the hearts of the children of men persuaded of this, all their deliberations were at an end: they would not only choose no other, but defer no longer to fix on him. And

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what can trouble the soul that is thus established? No change or overturning of outward things. Though the frame of the world itself were shaken to pieces, yet still, the bottom of this hope is upon him who changeth not. And whatever thy pressures be, whether poverty, sickness, or disquiet of mind, thou mayest draw abundant consolation from him in whom thou hast placed thy hope. There is only one thing that cruelly assaults hope by the way, and that is the guilt of sin. All the afflictions and troubles we meet with are not able to mar this hope or quench it, for where it is strong, it either breaks through them or flies above them: they cannot overcome it, for there is no affliction inconsistent with the love of God; yea, the sharpest affliction may sometimes have the clearest characters of his love upon it. But it is sin that presents him as angry to the view of the soul. When he looks through that cloud, he seems to be an enemy; and when we apprehend him in that aspect, we are affrighted and presently apprehend a storm. But even in this case this hope apprehends his mercy; and thus David here—

LECTURE V.

Ver. 8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.*

9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.*

10. *Remove thy stroke away from me. I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.*

11. *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.*

12. *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*

THIS is indeed the basis and foundation of all our other hopes, the free pardon of our sins. But none must entertain those sins if they desire to be pardoned. Repentance and remission of sins are still linked together in the scriptures; and he that would have sin pardoned, and

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yet live in it or retain the love of it, would have God and sin reconciled together, and that can never be. David finds his sins pressing him down; he sees them as an army of men set in battle array about him; and whither flies he for deliverance? Even to him whom he had offended.

We are naturally very partial judges of ourselves; and as if we were not sufficiently able by nature, we study and devise by art to deceive ourselves. We are ready to reckon any good that is in us to the full, nay, to multiply it beyond what it is; and further to help this, we use commonly to look on those who have less goodness in them, who are weaker, more foolish and worse than ourselves; and so we magnify the sense of our own worth and goodness by that comparison. And as in the goodness we have or imagine we have, so likewise in the evils we suffer, we use to extol them very much in conceit. We account our lightest afflictions very great; and to heighten our thoughts of them we do readily take a view of those who are more at ease and less afflicted than ourselves; and by these devices we nourish in ourselves pride by the overweening conceit of our goodness, and impatience by the overfeeling sense of our evils. But if we would help ourselves by comparison, we should do well to view those persons who are or have been eminent for holiness, recorded in holy writ, or whom we know in our own times, or have heard of in former times; and by this means we should lessen the great opinion we have of our own worth. And so likewise should we consider the many instances of great calamities and sorrows, which would tend to quiet our minds, and enable us to *possess our souls in patience* under the little burden of trials that lies upon us. And especially we shall find those instances to fall in together, that as persons have been very eminent in holiness, they have also been eminent in suffering very sore strokes and sharp scourges from the hand of God. If we would think on their consuming blows and broken bones, their *bones burnt as a hearth,* and their *flesh withered as grass,* certainly we should entertain our thoughts sometimes with wonder at God's indulgence to us, that we are so little afflicted when so many of the children of men and so many of the children of God suffer so many

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and so hard things; and this would very much add to the stock of our praises. We should not think that we are more innocent, as not deserving those things that are inflicted on others, but rather, that he, who thus measures out to them and to us, knows our size, and sees how weak we are in comparison of them; and that therefore he is indulgent to us, not because we are better, but because we are weaker, and are not able to bear so much as he lays on the stronger shoulders. Even in the sharpest of these rods there is mercy. It is a privilege to the sheep that is ready to wander, to be beaten into the right way. When thou art corrected, think that thereby thy sins are to be purged out, thy passions and lusts to be crucified by these pains; and certainly he that finds any cure of the evils of his spirit by the hardest sufferings of his flesh, gets a very gainful bargain. If thou account sin thy greatest unhappiness and mischief, thou will be glad to have it removed on any terms. There is at least in the time of affliction a cessation from some sins; the raging lust of ambition and pride doth cease when a man is laid upon his back; and these very cessations are some advantages. But there is one great benefit of affliction, which follows in the text, that it gives him the true measure of himself.

Man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity; but at his lowest estate, it appears best unto him how much vanity he is, and how much vanity he was at his best estate, seeing he was then capable of such a change to fall so low from such a height. As that great man who was seeking new conquests, when he fell upon the sand and saw the print of his own body, "Why," says he, "so small a parcel of earth will serve me, who am seeking after new kingdoms"—thus it is when a man is brought down; then he hath the right measure of himself, when he sees how vain a thing he is.

Thus the psalmist represents it here, both as an argument to move God to compassion, and to instruct himself and other men. So Job; *Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro with the wind? and wilt thou pursue dry stubble?* And David again in Psal. ciii. 14; *He knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust.* And his beauty, which seemed to be his perfection, yet when the

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hand of God is on him, it is blasted as a moth-eaten garment. This should teach us humility, and to beware of sin, which provokes God to pour out his heavy judgments upon us. If any be proud of honour, let him remember Nebuchadnezzar and Herod; or if proud of riches, or of wit and endowments of mind, let him think how soon God can make all these to wither and melt away. *Surely every man is vanity.*

What is this life we cleave so fast to and are so uneasy to hear of parting with, what is it but a trance, and a succession of sorrows, a weary tossing and tottering upon the waves of vanity and misery? No estate or course of life is exempted from the causes of this complaint: the poorer and meaner sort are troubled with wants, and the richer with the care of what they have, and sometimes with the loss of it; and the middle sort betwixt the two, they partake in common of the vexations of both, for their life is spent in care for keeping what they have, and in turmoil for purchasing more; besides a world of miseries and evils that are incident equally to all sorts of men, such as sickness and pain of body, which is both a sharp affliction and sits close to a man, and which he is least able, either by strength of mind or by any art or rule, to bear. And this guest does as oft haunt palaces as poor cottages. There are as many groans of sick and diseased bodies within silken curtains, as in the meanest lodging. Neither does godliness exempt the best of men from the sufferings of this life. David, who was both a great man and a good man, did share deeply in these, so that his conclusion still holds true; no instance can be found to infringe it: *Surely every man is altogether vanity.*

It remains only to inquire, what manner of men they are who are furnished with the best helps, and with the most comfortable mitigations of their trouble, and with the strongest additions of support and strength to bear them up under it. And it will certainly be found, that godliness alone hath this advantage. And among the many consolations godly men have under their troubles, this is one and the chief one, their recourse unto prayer. So David here, and in Psal. cxlii. 4, 5. So also *Hezekiah turned his face towards the wall:* he turns his back on all worldly counsels and vain helps, and betakes himself to

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prayer; and prayer brings ease and support, and seasonable deliverance to the godly man. But *their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after other gods;* and this all ungodly men do when they are afflicted. They run to other imaginary helps of their own, and these prove but the multipliers of sorrows, and add to their torment. They are *miserable* or troublesome *comforters*, like unskilful physicians, who add to the patient's pain, by nauseous, ill chosen, and it may be, pernicious drugs.

Now in this prayer of David, we find three things, which are the chief qualifications of all acceptable prayers. The first is *humility*. He humbly confesses his sins, and his own weakness and worthlessness. We are not to put on a stoical, flinty kind of spirit under our afflictions, that so we may seem to shun womanish repinings and complaints, lest we run into the other evil, of despising the hand of God; but we are to humble our proud hearts and break our unruly passions. There is something of this in the nature of affliction itself. As in the day time men are abroad, but the night draws them home, so in the day of prosperity men run out after vanities and pleasures, but when the dark night of affliction comes, then men should come home, and wisely lay the matter to heart. It is meet we *humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.* It is meet to say unto him, as Job said, *I have been chastised* or *have borne chastisement; I will not offend any more.* That is a kind of language that makes the rod fall out of his hand. That prayer ascends highest, which comes from the lowest depth of an humbled heart. But God *resisteth the proud.* He proclaims himself an enemy to pride and stiffness of spirit; but his grace seeks the humble heart, as water does the low ground.

If a holy heart be the temple of God and therefore a house of prayer, certainly, when it is framed and builded for such, the foundation of that temple is laid in deep humility; otherwise no prayers that are offered up in it have the smell of pleasing incense to him.

The second qualification of this prayer is *fervency* and *importunity*, which appears in the elegant gradation of the words: *Hear my prayer*, my words; if not that, yet *give ear to my cry*, which is louder; and if that prevail not, yet *hold not thy peace at my tears*, which is the loudest

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of all; so David elsewhere says *the voice of his weeping.* Though this gift of tears doth often flow from the natural temper, yet where that temper becomes spiritual and religious, it proves a singular instrument of repentance and prayer. But yet there may be a very great height of piety and godly affections where tears are wanting; yea, this defect may proceed from a singular sublimity of religion in their souls, being acted more in the upper region of the intellectual mind, and so not communicating much with the lower affections or these expressions of them.

We are not to judge of our spiritual proficiency by the gift of prayer, for the heart may be very spiritually affected, where there is no readiness or volubility of words. The sure measure of our growth is to be had from our holiness, which stands in this, to see how our hearts are crucified to the world, and how we are possessed with the love of God, and with ardent longings after union with him, and dwelling in his presence hereafter, and in being conformed to his will here.

It is the greatest folly imaginable in some to shed tears for their sins, and within a little while to return to them again. They think there is some kind of absolution in this way of easily venting themselves by tears in prayer, and when a new temptation returns, they easily yield to it. This is lightness and foolishness, like the inconstancy of a woman who entertains new lovers in her mourning apparel, having expressed much sorrow and grief for her former husband.

Now fervency in prayer hath in it, *first,* attentiveness of mind. If the mind be not present, it is impossible that much of the heart and affections can be there. How shall we think that God will hear those prayers which we do not hear ourselves? And shall we think them worthy of his acceptance, that are not worthy of our thoughts? Yet we should not leave off prayer because of the wanderings of our hearts in it, for that is the very design of the devil, but still we must continue in it, and amend this fault as much as we can, by remembering with whom we have to do, by freeing our minds as much as may be from the entanglements and multiplicity of business, and by labouring to have our thoughts often in heaven; for

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where the heart is much, it will be ever and anon turning thitherward without any difficulty.

Fervency of prayer hath in it *secondly*, an intense bent of the affections; to have our desires as ardent as can be for the pardon of sin, for the mortifying of our lusts and passions, for the delivering of us from the love of ourselves and this present world; and for such spiritual things to pray often, and to follow it with importunity. This is to pray fervently, never to rest till an answer come.

The third qualification is *faith*. *He who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* And certainly, as he that comes to God must believe this, so he that believes this cannot but come to God; and if he be not presently answered, he that believes makes no haste—he resolves patiently to wait for the Lord, and to go to no other.

Surely there is much to be had in prayer. All good may be obtained and all evil averted by it; yea, it is a reward to itself. It is the greatest dignity of the creature to be admitted to converse with God. And certainly the soul that is much in prayer grows in purity, and is raised by prayer to the despising of all those things that the world admires and is in love with, and by a wonderful way is conformed to the likeness of God.

I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. In the law, God recommends strangers to the care and compassion of his people; now David returns the argument to him to persuade him to deal kindly with him: *I am a stranger with thee*, that is, *before thee*, in this world wherein thou hast appointed me to sojourn a few days. And I betake myself to thy protection in this strange country; I seek shelter under the shadow of thy wings; therefore have compassion upon me. He that looks on himself as a stranger, and is sensible of the darkness both round about him in this wilderness and also within him, will often put up that request with David; *I am a stranger on this earth; hide not thy commandments from me*; do not let me lose my way. And as we should use this argument to persuade God to look down upon us, so likewise to persuade ourselves to send up our hearts and desires to him. What is the joy of our life, but the

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thoughts of that other life, our home, before us? And certainly he that lives much in these thoughts, set him where you will here, he is not much pleased or displeased; but if his Father call him home, that word gives him his heart's desire.

LECTURE VI.

Ver. 13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more.*

WHY is it that we do not extremely hate that which we so desperately love—sin? The deformity of it is unspeakable; and, besides, it is the cause of all our woes. Sin hath opened the sluices and lets in all the deluge of sorrows, which makes the life of poor man nothing else than vanity and misery, so that the meanest orator in the world may be eloquent enough on that subject. What is our life, but a continual succession of many deaths? Though we should say nothing of all the bitternesses and vexations that are hatched under the sweetest pleasures in the world, this one thing is enough, the multitude of diseases and pains, the variety of distempers that those houses we are lodged in are exposed to. Poor creatures are ofttimes tossed betwixt two, the fear of death and the tardiness of life; and under these fears, they cannot tell which to choose. Holy men are not exempted from some apprehensions of God's displeasure because of their sins; and that may make them cry out with David, *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and be no more.* Or perhaps this may be a desire not so much simply for the prolonging of life, as for the intermitting of their pain, to have ease from the present smart. The extreme torment of some sickness may draw the most fixed and confident spirits to cry out very earnestly for a little breathing. Or rather, if the words imply the desire of a recovery and the spinning out of the thread of his life a little longer, surely the psalmist intended to employ it for God and his service. But long life was suitable to the promises of that time: so Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 5. There is no doubt but that those holy men under the law knew somewhat of the state of immortality. Their calling

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themselves *strangers on earth* argued that they were no strangers to these thoughts. But it cannot be denied, that this doctrine was but darkly laid out in those times. It is Christ Jesus who *hath brought life and immortality to light*, who did illuminate life and immortality, which before stood in the dark.

Surely the desire of life is, for the most part, sensual and base, when men desire that they may still enjoy their animal pleasures, and are loath to be parted from them. They are pleased to term it a desire to live and repent, and yet few do it when they are spared; like evil debtors, who desire forbearance from one term to another, but with no design at all to pay. But there is a natural desire of life, something of abhorrence in nature against the dissolution of these tabernacles. We are loath to go forth; like children who are afraid to walk in the dark, not knowing what may be there. In some, such a desire of life may be very reasonable. Being surprised by sickness, and apprehensions of death, and sin unpardoned, they may desire a little time before they enter into eternity; for that change is not a thing to be hazarded upon a few days' or hours' preparation. I will not say that a death-bed repentance is altogether desperate, but certainly it is very dangerous, and to be suspected; and therefore the desire of a little time longer, in such a case, may be very allowable.

I will not deny but that it is possible even for a believer to be taken in such a posture, that it may be very uncomfortable to him to be carried off so, through the affrightments of death, and his darkness as to his after state. On the other hand, it is an argument of a good measure of spirituality and height of the love of God, to *desire to depart* and be dissolved, in the midst of health, and the affluence of worldly comforts. But for men to desire and wish to be dead when they are troubled and vexed with any thing, is but a childish folly, flowing from a discontented mind, which being over, they desire nothing less than to die. It is true there may be a natural desire of death, which at some times hath shined in the spirit of some natural men; and there is much reason for it—not only to be freed from the evils and troubles of this life, but even from those things which many of this foolish world account their happiness, such as sensual pleasures, to eat

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and drink, and to be hungry again, and still to round that same course, which to souls that are raised above sensual things is burdensome and grievous.

But there is a spiritual desire of death, which is very becoming a Christian. For Jesus Christ hath not only opened very clearly the doctrine of eternal life, but he himself hath passed through death, and lain down in the grave. He hath perfumed that passage and warmed that bed for us; so that it is sweet and amiable for a Christian to pass through and follow him, and to be where he is. It is a strange thing, that the souls of Christians have not a continual desire to go to that company which is above, finding so much discord and disagreement among the best of men that are here; to go to *the spirits of just men made perfect*, where there is light, and love, and nothing else; to go to the *company of angels*, a higher rank of blessed spirits; but, most of all, to go *to God, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament*. And to say nothing positively of that glory (for the truth is, we can say nothing of it), the very evils that death delivers the true Christian from, may make him long for it; for such a one may say —I shall die, and go to a more excellent country, where I shall be happy for ever; that is, I shall die no more; I shall sorrow no more; I shall be sick no more; and which is yet more considerable, I shall doubt no more, and shall be tempted no more; and, which is the chiefest of all, I shall sin no more.

PSALM VIII.

Ver. 3. *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained.*

4. *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

THAT which is needful and competent for us to know concerning God, he hath been pleased to reveal; and our most excellent and happy employment in this world is to learn it.

The third verse of this psalm affords us clearly the doctrine of the creation. That part in the psalmist's eye,

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the heavens, being the highest and largest of the visible world, surrounding and containing all the rest, is mentioned;—*the work of thy fingers*, importing the curious embellishments of them;—*the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained*, placed them in their orbits, and set them going, and appointed them the periods and revolutions which they observe. So the same hand hath fetched all other things out of the same nothing, as we have it in the beginning of this Book, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*;—and it is therefore to be believed, because we find it there.

Can the worker and his operation be discovered by strength of reason? Certainly they who have been of most confessed and famous ability in that way have been partly of another mind; and we see it reduced to its truest principle, Heb. xi. 4; *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* Yet this we may boldly affirm, that there is not only nothing in sound reason crossing it, but that all the cavils alleged against it are most weak of themselves; and there be many things in nature that plead strongly for it, which we may, yea, ought to take notice of.

The continual turnings and changes of things, the passing of one thing to another, the destruction of some things and the production of others, and the general decaying of all, the very heavens waxing old as a garment, declare that the whole frame is mutable and corruptible, and therefore not from eternity, but terminable in its beginning.

There is in this a very strong appearance of the beginning of the world, and of time being according to the sacred history we have of it and which faith receives, that there are not any records nor any memoirs or history of time or things produceable in the world, that go higher up, no, nor any human histories that go near so high. Now if there were thousands of ages before, whence is so deep a silence of what passed in them?

They who can conceive it may take this reason into consideration, that if the world had been from eternity, then certainly the number of revolutions would be infinite. Now to that which is so, nothing can be added; so that it were impossible there could be any new days or years.

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But above all dispute, we believe it upon HIS word, who by his word gave all things a being. The whole Trinity, as in all works without they are together equally concerned, so in that first and great work of making all things.

As by the Father, so by the Word were all things made, and the Spirit moved upon the face of the deep. Trinity in unity created.

It is most vain to inquire why the world was not created sooner, yea, it is nonsense; for the same question might equally be moved whensoever the world had been made, though it had lasted now millions of years; still there would have been an eternity preceding, wherein it was not; and time itself was concreated. Nor was there any preexistent unformed matter. It is a poor shallow conceit, that any such thing was needful to the Almighty. It is even a monstrous, absurd conceit, that any such thing was possible; and it destroys itself; for if this framed world could not have a being from eternity, much less frameless matter. So, of necessity, all things were made of nothing; received a being from the infinite Being as the spring of all being. His hands stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth. His fingers set them all in this sweet and admirable order, in a beautiful frame.

Now these expressions are suited to our reach, but the truth is, his finger and his whole hand are all one, and his hand is his word; Psalm xxxiii. 6; Gen. i. 3. And his word is his all-powerful and eternal will; that is the breath of his mouth, and his stretched out arm. *He said*, that is, he willed it, *and it was so*. When as yet there was no man nor angel, no heaven nor earth, no time nor being, but the alone blessed Trinity, eternally self happy, upon the simple act of his absolute will came forth this whole frame out of the womb of Omnipotence. And this is that certain truth which we believe under the name of creation.

This supposed, it is very easy to conceive, yea, it is impossible to question it, that it had been as easy for that power to have brought forth all in complete perfection at one instant, as to have divided the work into six days. And as we cannot think it easier, so, we cannot but think it better, since he chose, yea, because he chose it, as for that reason better. Well may his will be sufficient cause why that way of his production of all things was better,

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seeing that his will was purely the cause of the production and being of all.

But in part we may observe some advantage in that way, that he made so many days' work of it, and proceeded by degrees to bring it to perfection; that we might the more clearly perceive and more distinctly consider the greatness and excellency of the work, and the wise contrivance of it in its several parts and progress, which we could not so well comprehend altogether. Now we consider him as first framing one great mass, and then proceeding to beautify it, first with that which is indeed the first beautifier of all things, light, and then ordering the successive interchange of it with its opposite, darkness, that sets it off and makes its beauty appear the more, giving them their names, day and night; then, proportioning and dividing the rooms of the great house into upper and lower, according to his model and design; then decorating them with rich furniture, and providing all kinds of store in great variety and abundance. And thus, having first prepared all, having built, beautified, and replenished so stately a palace, then framed he the guest for whom he intended it, and whom he appointed to dwell in it. Then he said, *Let us make man in our image.*

Thus the work of itself, and the order of it, and all the parts, carry on them his name who formed them. How do his power, and wisdom, and goodness, appear in them! And yet how little do we see and observe it! It shines bright in all his works, but we are blind. We look on them and see him not. O what a childish, trifling thing is man in all his ways, till he learns to remark God in all, and to have his soul upon all occasions musing and admiring, and sweetly losing itself in God, that immense sea of excellencies! What a bottomless wonder is that Power, from which, by a simple act of will, issued forth all being! This vast fabric and all things in it, he willed they should be, and where never any thing was, there appeared, on a sudden, heaven and earth: the earth settled upon his word, so that it cannot be moved, and enriched with such a variety of plants, and flowers, and fruits growing forth, and springs and mines within the bowels of it; the seas fitted for navigation, together with the multitudes of creatures in it, small and great, and the impetuousness of it, yet confined and forced to roll in its channel, so that it

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cannot go forth, the small sands giving check to the great waters. O how strong and large that hand, which without help expands the heavens as a curtain! Look up and see; consider their height and roundness; such a glorious canopy set with such sparkling diamonds! Then think how swift their motion, and yet imperceivable to us; no motion here below comparable, and yet they seem not to stir at all! And in all, their great Lord and ours so conspicuous! And yet who looks on them with such an eye, as to behold him, as David here beholds him, *When I consider thy heavens, the work,* &c.

He is admirable in all. The very lowest and smallest creatures have their wonders of divine wisdom in their frame, more than we are able to think. He is great in the least of his works. The smallest flies—how strange the fashioning of the organs of life and use in so little room! The man who is still in search of wisdom, will find a school and a lesson in all places, and see every where the greatness and goodness of his God. If he walk forth in the evening, when this lower world is clothed with the dark mantle of the night, yet still he can look upwards to the pavement of the throne of God, and think how glorious it is on the other side, when the moon and stars make this side, even in the night, so beautiful. And this saying of David's looks like a night meditation by the view of moon and stars—

Thy heavens, these thy works so glorious; thou therefore infinitely more glorious; then can I not but increase in wonder, that, dwelling above these heavens, thou regardest so poor a worm as man creeping on this earth.

What is man? Enosh, weak, mortal man; and *Ben-Adam,* the son of earth, the earthly man; David was taught so to look on his mean part and low condition; and on his better part, as follows in verse 5, as a sort of divinity freely conferred upon him. Thus men should learn to view themselves in this twofold light. *By the grace of God I am that I am,* saith St. Paul. Truly man is a wretched and proud creature, a bundle of vanity and vileness; and yet he thinks himself some great matter, while God is hid from him, and he is ignorant of his greatness.

No discourse or reasoning will humble the foolish heart of man: though he be even of the most worthless and basest sort of men, and hath in this condition nothing but

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what is despicable, yet he flatters himself with some fancy or other, some imagined advantage that swells him. He cannot be truly vile in his own eyes till they look up to the excellency of God, and return from that down upon himself. Then he is forced to bow, and fall low, and abhor himself in dust and ashes. Once he was wise and powerful, or some way deserving, as he thought, to be respected; but now the glory and sublimity of God make him to be as nothing in his own eyes.

What is man? David, a great and a good man, a king and a prophet, and yet a man, viewing and comparing himself with his own eyes in respect of the great King of all the world, cries out, *What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* These words deserve to be considered. Thou mindest him in all these things, the works above him; even in the framing of these heavens, the moon and the stars, designing his good. Thou makest all attend and serve him. It is not an empty visiting of him, but thou seest all his necessities, and providest for them. He sets his heart on man, and all *his delights are with the sons of men.*

But above all visits, that visit is to be remarked and admired, when the eternal Word, by whom this world was made, came down and was *made flesh*—came from his glorious palace, from the bosom of the Father, to visit man in that deep and profound abyss of misery into which he was fallen, and to lift him out of it, and cleanse, and clothe, and dignify him—came to make the slaves of Satan sons of God. And the psalmist here points at Christ, as the following words are applied, Heb. ii. 9. This is a descending indeed, which the angels are still prying into, looking into for the bottom, and cannot see it, for it hath none. O that Christ should be disregarded, and his love slighted! *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.* He, the same who became like unto us and united our flesh to his blessed deity, did give a being to all things, and *by him all things consist.*

Our Head and Saviour is no less than the Mighty Power, Creator of the world. He who is our flesh, he who had his arms wrapped up in swaddling clothes and afterwards stretched upon the cross, he it was who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth.

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The weight of the love of so great a King should press us low. And then the persuasion of his almighty power assures us of complete redemption; for our salvation is in a sure and strong hand. We have a mighty Redeemer. *Thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.*

When I behold THY heavens, says the Psalmist. The carnal mind sees God in nothing, not even in spiritual things, his word and ordinances. The spiritual mind sees him in every thing, even in natural things; in looking on the heavens, and the earth, and all the creatures; it sees all in that notion, in their relation to God as his work, and in them his glory appearing; it stands in awe, fearing to abuse his creatures and his favours to his dishonour. *The day is thine, and the night also is thine;* therefore ought not I to forget thee through the day, nor in the night. All that I use, and all that I have, is not mine, but thine, and therefore all shall be for thee. Thou art my aim and scope in all. Therefore God quarrels with his people, because they had forgotten this; Hos. ii. 8. The most are strangers to these thoughts. They can eat, drink, and sleep, lie down and rise up, and pass one day after another, without one reverend or affectionate thought of God. They may give him a formal good morrow, and then farewell for all the day long. They offer up their prayers, as they say, and think they have done enough, and that afterwards their hearts may go whither they will, provided they escape grosser sins. They never check themselves in wandering from God all the day, if they fall not into some deep mire.

But even they who are somewhat more mindful of God, and see him in his works, and consider them so as to observe him in them, yet are very faulty in thinking of him seldom, and in the slightness of such thoughts: they are not deep in them. We do not accustom ourselves to walk with God, to a continued and delightful converse with him, to be still with him. We can turn our eyes no way but he is visible and legible; and if he were our delight and his name sweet to us, we should eye that more in every thing, than the things themselves.

The heart will readily espy and take hold of every

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small occasion of remembering that which it loves. That which carries any impression of the person, on whom the affection is set, is more looked upon on that side and in that reference, than any other.

Certainly were God the choice of our hearts, our natural use and enjoyment of things would not relish so much with us nor take us up so much, as the viewing of him in them all. In our affairs and our refreshments, in company and apart, in the beholding of heaven and earth and all that is round about us, our eye would be most on him whom our soul loveth. What a pity and what a shame is it, that we who profess ourselves to be his children, and even they who truly are so, should so little mind our Father and his greatness and glory, who is continually minding us and our good! It is indeed a double standing wonder in the world which he hath made, that God should take so much notice of man, and man should take so little notice of God.

Were this known truth of the creation wisely improved, we should find much in it that we commonly observe not, at least, that we use not. This one thing surely it might gain upon us, to fear his displeasure who is so great and so powerful, who hath the whole host of heaven and the great army of all creatures at his command.

When he commands they must obey; for he commanded and they were made: they have their being from his command. How quickly can he crush those who proudly rebel against him! How easily can he shake them to pieces, the greatest and the strongest of them! He poureth contempt upon princes. Yea, what are they? Base potsherds of earth striving with their Maker; though somewhat bigger than others, yet as easily broken by his sceptre. O you, that, after all warnings, dare walk on in your wicked ways, in drunkenness, or swearing, or any secret heart wickedness, you know not who is your party; the great God, the Former of all things. *Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?* You who do not fear him are in a fearful estate. Learn to know him, and seek unto him. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live. *Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night.* Amos, v. 8.

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There is in this a strong ground of spiritual confidence, both for the church's concernment and our own in every estate. This first work of God, rightly looked on, answers all the difficulties of the greatest works we can expect at his hands. Let Zion's enemies grow to their highest, they cannot rise so high as to be above this Almighty God, who framed the heavens. Let the church be brought to the lowest deeps of distress, yet cannot she fall so low, but his everlasting arm is long enough to reach her and draw her out of it, which drew the whole world out of nothing. He doth therefore often represent, by his prophets, this very work as a certain evidence of his unbounded power. See Isa. xliii. 13; xliv. 24; li. 12, 13; Jer. li. 19, 20; Zech. xii. 1. What task can be so great as to surcharge him, who so easily brought forth a world? What number can be too small, what instrument too weak in his hand, for the greatest work, who, without either working instrument or materials, built such a palace?

Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel—Why? Wherefore have they no reason to fear, they being but as a worm?—*I will help thee, saith the Lord. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp thrashing instrument having teeth; thou shalt thrash the mountains and beat them small, and shall make the hills as chaff.* A worm in thyself, but in my hand a thrashing instrument. Weak Jacob and his strong God are too hard for all the world.

On the other side, what serve multitudes without him? All were originally nothing, and when he wills they prove as nothing. Severed from his concurrence, as ciphers, multiply them as you will, still they signify nothing. Ten thousand men, without God, are ten thousand nothings. We have had very late and very clear experiment of this, both to our grief and to our comfort. But both are forgotten, and indeed were never duly considered: for if they had, they would not soon, yea, they truly would never be forgotten by us. Well however it grieveth us, by reason of our own continuing hard in wickedness. Yet this am I sure of, that the strong arm of the Lord is engaged in this work. He hath already appeared in it, and therefore will not let it fall; and though we were at a lower ebb than lately we were, yet should we rise again by his strength. Doubt it not, the enemies of our peace shall

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be ashamed, and God shall be yet more glorious in the world than ever, not only in our outward deliverance, but in that which is far richer and of higher beauty, the power and glory of his ordinances. He shall make things that *are not*, to *be*, by the mighty power of his mouth, and throughout the world Jesus Christ shall go on conquering. In his name lies the reason of his prevailing. His name is called the Word of God, that same Word by which all things were made; therefore no opposite power is able to stand before him. It is a great work to ruin great Babel, but his strength is enough for it. Mighty is the Lord God who judgeth. It is a great work to restore his church, but here is power enough for it, and it is spoken of under the resemblance of the creation, Isa. li. 16.

For the estate of thy soul, thou that art thoughtful of that, what cause hast thou to suspect? Is there any plea left for distrust in thy lowest condition? Thou art about great things, and findest all not only difficulties, but impossibilities to thee. Good is it that thou shouldst find it so, and be emptied of all fancy of self strength. But then, look up above thyself and all created, to a creating power. If thou canst not subdue thy lusts and iniquities, resolve to wrestle. Wrestle as thou wilt, still they are too hard for thee; but look to him who came to destroy the works of Satan. Hath not thy almighty Lord resolved to do it for thee? Thou findest nothing within but blindness and hardness, canst not repent, nor believe, nor think a right thought of God. It is so. But one word from him can do all this, and make all those to subsist that now are not. Therefore, lay thyself before him as dead, yea, as very nothing. Say—Lord, I am nothing of all that which constitutes the being of a Christian in holiness, in faith, in love; but speak thou the word, and I shall be a new creature to thy praise. There is nothing upon my soul but darkness; but art not thou he who said, *Let there be light, and there was light?* That word, Lord, say it again to my soul, and it shall be so.

Think not to bring any thing with thee. Renovation is as absolute and free a work as creation. Could his creature oblige him to make it before it had a being? No more can it oblige him to save it, or to give it a new being in Christ. All is free. The miracles of Christ, signs of

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power and goodness, are preludes to his greater work. It is most senseless to have a thought of preventing him, from whom all good and all being flow. And this greater work he performs. If any be in Christ, *he is a new creature:* the word is, *all made new*, new delights and desires, and thoughts new; a new heaven and a new earth, a new soul and a new body, renewed in holiness, sanctified, and made conformable to Jesus Christ.

And when thou findest some work of grace, which thou canst not wholly deny, and yet wantest that peace and joy which thou desirest, look to him for that too. Thou findest it not from the word preached; yet he can speak it, and even by that word wherein formerly thou didst not find it. It is *the fruit of the lips*, but it is so withal, that it is his creation: he only causes it to be. *I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace.* The Father wrought by the Son in the first creation, but in a new and special manner he works by him in this second creation. He is that *Word made flesh* who is the life and the spring of all the grace and comfort thou desirest or readest of. Go to him. He delights to let forth his mercies to thirsting souls; to revive them, to restore or turn them again, when they are in a swoon, as the word is, Psal. xxiii. 3. The more thou puttest him to it, the more shalt thou experience his prevailing power and the fulness of grace that dwells in him, which is no more diminished by all he shows forth, than his Divine power was weakened by the framing of the world. There is no scarcity of Spirit in him; therefore he proclaimed it as plural: *If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow* RIVERS *of living water.*

How manifold are thy works, O Lord! says the psalmist; and then he adds that wherein all the variety of them agrees, the holding forth of his incomparable wisdom, from whose wisdom they are; *In wisdom thou hast made them all.* As there are some of them more excellent than others, they certainly do, in a clearer and more eminent degree, glorify God. In the great fabric, that part which hath the highest place, the heavens, hath also this advantage—the greatness of the Great Architect appears somewhat more bright in it. Therefore it is singled out from the rest for that purpose, both here and in Psal. xix. 1.

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But beyond all the rest, and even beyond the heavens are the wisdom and goodness of God displayed in the framing of his reasonable creatures.

There are of them two stages; the one higher, the angels, the other lower, yet but *a little lower*, man; as here we have them together. *Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels;* of the nature of a spirit, a rational, intelligent spirit.

ISAIAH VI.

Ver. 1. *In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*

I SAW. Observe the freedom of God in his choice of men to be near him and know him. And in the measuring out of the degrees of discovery unto those men differently, some had extraordinary revelations; and though prophetic visions now cease, yet there are certainly higher and clearer coruscations of God upon some souls, than upon many others, who yet are children of light, and partake of a measure of that light shining within them. Thus we are not carvers and choosers, and therefore are not peremptorily to desire any thing in kind or measure that is singular—that were pride and folly. But above all things we are to esteem and submissively to desire still more and more knowledge of God, and humbly to wait and keep open the passage of light; not to close the windows, not to be indulgent to any known sin or impure affection; that will soon obstruct it. Into a filthy soul wisdom will not enter.

In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord on his throne. There is another king named here, to denote the time by; but he was a diseased and a dying king, who lived some years a leper, and then died. Men may speak in a court style of vain wishes, *O king, live for ever;* but this King here on the throne is indeed the King immortal, the ever living God.

God measures and proportions all his means to their ends. When he calls men to high services, he furnishes them with suitable preparations and enablements. Thus

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here with the prophet. He was to denounce heavy things against his own nation, a proud, stubborn people; to deal boldly and freely with the highest, yea, with the king himself; and he is prepared by a vision of God. What can a man fear after that? All regal majesty and pomp looks petty and poor after that sight. Two kings together on their thrones in royal robes did no whit astonish him who had seen a greater. *I saw,* says Micaiah, *the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the hosts of heaven standing by.* Much like this is the vision of Isaiah here before us.

Eyes dazzled with the sun see not the glittering of drops of dew on the earth; and those are quickly gone, with all their faint and fading glory, to a soul taken with the contemplation of God. How meanly do they spend their days, who bestow them on counting money, or courting little earthen idols in ambition or love! From how high a stand doth he look down on those, who looks on God and admires his greatness, wonders at what he sees, and still seeks after more! These two are therefore joined together, *beholding the beauty of the Lord,* and *inquiring in his temple. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.* Psal. xxvii. 4.

Ver. 2, 3. *Above it stood the seraphims; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.* These glorious courtiers, flaming spirits, are light and love, whose very feet are too bright for us, as his face is too bright for them; and they cry, *Holy, holy, holy;* thrice holy, most holy Three, one God, *Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.* This they cry one to another, echoing it and returning it incessantly. They that praise him most come nearest their life. When we are to pray or offer any worship to the great God in the sanctuary, especially in solemn worship there, let us think of him as thus on his throne above, and the diffusion of his glory there, of his train filling the upper temple, and so stoop low and fall down before him. *Holy, holy, holy.* This is the main thing wherein he is glorious, and we are to know and adore him in this view, and abhor ourselves as in his sight.

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The whole earth. So many creatures and various works and affairs, fruits and plants, and rich commodities—and so many calamities and miseries that kingdoms and people are afflicted with by turns—and so many disorders, and such wickedness of men in public and private matters—and yet in all these varieties and contrarieties of things, this one is the sum of all, and all is taken up in it, *The whole earth is full of his glory.* In framing and upholding, in ruling and ordering all, what a depth of power and wisdom!

Ver. 4. *The posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*

How true must that be, that at his voice the earth quakes and the mountains tremble, when at the voice of an angel crying or proclaiming his name, the very threshold of the temple, the then holiest part of the earth, moves! This in the vision was intended to represent the dreadfulness of his great name, which vile men dare baffle in vain oaths, and can speak thereof without sense; but hearts that are indeed his living temples will find this emotion: when his name is proclaimed, or when they mention or think of it, the posts will be moved with an awful trembling.

And the house was filled with smoke. This was here a symbol of the presence and majesty of God. See Psal. xcvii. 2. *Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne;* not a signal of displeasure, as some take it. He dwells in light that is inaccessible, and round about is thick darkness, shutting out the weak eyes of men, which were not able to abide the brightness of his glory. Much of our knowledge here lies in this, to know that we know him not; and much of our praise, to confess that we cannot praise him: —*Silentium tibi laus,* as they read Psal. lxv. 1.

Ver. 5. *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*

THEN *said I, Woe is me!* He is not lifted up with the dignity, that he should be honoured with such a vision of God; but, on the contrary, is struck with humble, holy fear: *I am undone!* This constitutes much of the exer-

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cise of souls admitted nearest to God, even this astonishment and admiration that such as they should be regarded and raised to that height, and holy fear in a sense of their unholiness. When the blessed Virgin heard a voice very much to her own advantage, instead of rising in her own conceit upon it, *she was troubled and marvelled what manner of salutation it should be,* and was struck with fear, so that the angel found it needful to say, *Fear not.*

Illusions and deceits of spirits of this kind cannot be better distinguished from true manifestations of God, than by this, that they breed pride and presumption in the heart, make it vain and haughty; while true senses, and joys, and discoveries of love, in what kind soever, do most powerfully humble.

For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. The mother and nurse of pride is ignorance of God. A small glance of him will make the best of men abhor themselves, and still the nearer sight of him, the lower conceit will there be of self, and the deeper sense of impurity and vileness. This tells us, that though we hear and speak of God, alas! we know him not.

I am a man of unclean lips. He mentions this the rather, because he heard that song which he would have joined with, but durst not, because of *polluted lips.* Thus we must confess we are polluted all over, but much of our pollution breaks out by the lips, yet, commonly, we think not on it.

I am undone. We could not indeed bear much, we could not see God and live; therefore he veils himself. But surely we might see much more than we do, and live the better for it, the more humbly and holily. Our pollutions hinder and unfit us, as the prophet implies when he says, *A man of unclean lips.* But O that we saw so much of him as to see this pollution, which makes us so unworthy and so unfit to see him!

He first cries, *I am a man of unclean lips,* and then adds, *I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.* This is the true method: there can be no right sense of pollutions about us, but that which begins with a sense of those within us. Few men reflect much on themselves; or if they do, they view themselves by a false light.

Unclean lips. This he says in regard of the voice he

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heard. And with regard to the much irreverence with which we mention God, both ministers and people, as much of all our heart pollutions have their vent this way, so, the promise of sanctifying his people runs much on this, Zeph. iii. 9. They of a *pure lip* shall offer. All are of the holy order, a *royal priesthood*, and through sanctified lips as the censer, still they offer incense of prayer and praise. *He is a perfect man that offends not in word.* Jam. iii. 2. Commonly by much speaking there is much pollution: *In many words there wants not sin*, Prov. x. 19. Therefore *let your speech be always seasoned with salt*, Col. iv. 6. Now many speeches need much salt, otherwise some part will be rotten, at least unsavoury. Much of the sin of the land consists in this. There are few companies where God is not dishonoured and provoked by our communication; and till this be laid to heart, judgments will multiply and grow instead of decreasing. Few, even of those who *fear the Lord, speak often one to another* in a strain that God delights, not only to hearken to, but to write down and register for their good.

And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. We infect each other when we meet. There is little converse that a man returns the better by, yea, by the most he is the worse; he brings back often more pollution, more folly and vanity by most companies and discourses. But we see here, that impurity humbly acknowledged is graciously removed.

Ver. 6. *Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar.*

IMPURITY well discovered to a man, is half cured. Whensoever God graciously shows a man his own unsanctifiedness, there he goes on to cleanse and sanctify him. The light that discovers, is followed by a burning coal that purges away.

The Holy Spirit is that purifying fire. A touch of it cleanseth the hearts and lips, and kindles that affection in the soul which cannot die, which not many, which no waters can quench again. It doth this to all that are sanctified, but eminently it doth it, or, at least, they desire

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it may, to those who are to be the instruments of enlightening, purifying, and kindling others. So, in the resemblance of fiery tongues came down this Spirit on the apostles; and thence they themselves were as burning coals scattered through the nations, blessed incendiaries of the world, setting it on fire with the love of Christ.

Ver. 7. *And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged.*

Thine iniquity is taken away, how impure soever before. This free grace is wonderful, to make some who have been notoriously unclean, by the change wrought by this fire, the touch of a coal, to become eminently gracious, and messengers of grace to others, carrying this and spreading it. They, though originally of dark clay, are by this fire made transparent glass, through which the light of the gospel shines into the church.

This *coal taken from the altar* may denote the deriving of the Spirit from Jesus Christ our Priest, Altar, Sacrifice, and all, by which we are purified and made fit for his service. He is the fountain of light, and life, and purity, and all grace to his messengers and all his followers. His grace is indeed a *live coal,* where heavenly heat is mixed with earth, the fulness of the Godhead with our nature in human flesh. Thereby we draw near; and especially they who bear his name to men, under a sense of their own impurity, entreat his touch, as devout Bernard, who in a holy hyperbole, exclaims, "Had the prophet need of a coal? O then grant me a whole globe of fire, to purge away my filthiness, and make me a fit messenger to this people!"

Thy sin is purged. The children of God are a wonder to themselves, when that Spirit comes in, who conquers and purges so suddenly and easily what they before groan under, and wrestle with, very long to little or no purpose. It is *a change of the right hand of the Most High,* as the Vulgate reads, Psal. lxxvii. 10. *I said, this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High*—"Mutatio dextræ Excelsi." A touch of that will cleanse and heal. The all purifying virtue of his

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Spirit, whereof this baptism of the prophet's lips was a symbol, takes away the dross which by other means than that fire cannot be purged. So in metals much pains may be taken, and strength of hand used with little effect; that at most does but scratch the surface, makes the outside a little bright and shining, but severs not the dross from within; that cannot be done without fire. Have we not found how vainly we attempt while God withholds his hand? Yea, while a man fancies self pureness, he is the most impure, as Job says, ix. 30, 31. *If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.* Therefore prayer is the great resource of a soul under a sense of uncleanness, begging a new creation, for such it is indeed—*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me;* following God with this suit, and resolving to follow him till He grant it: for we well know he is able, and may say, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

This fire hath two effects; it works purity and activity; it takes away sin, and puts in spirit and life for obedience. And so here; *Thy sin is purged,* and then he says, ver. 8. *Here am I: send me.* And the former is effectual towards the latter: the more the soul is cleansed, the more alive and able it is made for service. The purging out of those sickly humours makes it more vigorous and able; whereas their abounding clogs the spirits, and makes the vital operations heavy and weak. A soul well cleansed from the love of sin, and the world, and self, is in a healthful temper and goes nimbly to any work. Outward discouragements and difficulties are then nothing. A feverish distemper within hinders, and makes one lazy and unwieldy, unwilling and unable to labour: but that well purged and cured, a man cares less for the hot weather without; strength of nature endures that more easily. O how sweet to be thus actuated by love, a pure intention and desire of doing God service, and of bringing him in glory! Other motives, or the mixtures of them are base; and though God may make use sometimes of such, yet he sees within, and knows what spring makes the wheels go, and he gives them their reward here—somewhat possibly

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of that they seek, success and credit and a name; but the after reward of faithful servants, they need not look for in that work; for they receive their reward; and can they expect more? Many a *Here am I,* comes from other incentives than an altar coal; and so they may burn and shine a while, but they soon consume and die out in a snuff. The heavenly altar fire alone keeps in, and returns to heaven where it was kindled.

There is many a hot furious march under the semblance and name of zeal for God, that loves to be seen; as Jehu, *Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord.* Such persons may flatter themselves into that conceit in the heat of action, to think it is for God, while he sees through it, and judges it as it is, zeal for self and their own interest; and he gives them accordingly some hireling journeyman's wages, and then turns them off. But O where the heart is purely actuated by a desire of his glory, and seeks nothing else, for such remains that blessed word, *Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into thy Master's joy.*

This then is to be sought for by ministers and eminent servants in public affairs, yea, by all that offer any service to God—a readiness from love. Something of this there is in all who are truly his, though held down in many, and almost smothered with rubbish; and in these there is some mixture of flesh drawing back. *The spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak,* and a load to it, hindering its working; and this strife is often found as a horse to an unskilful rider, at once pricked with the spur and checked with the bridle. But where this spirit of love is, it doth prevail, and wastes that opposition daily, and groweth in strength, becomes more quick and ready, more freed from self, and more actuated by the will of God; attaining somewhat further in that conformity with Heaven, where shall be no will striving, but his alone; where those gloriously bright spirits stand ready for all commands, *who excel in strength,* and employ it all *to do his commandments.* And the more like them we be here, the more lively hope have we to be shortly with them, and to be wholly as they are.

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Ver. 8. *Also, I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and, who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I: send me.*

THIS inquiry imports not a doubtful deliberation in God, but a purpose to send. He is represented as a king, advising with himself or his council. And this is by some conceived as an intimation of the mystery of the Trinity, as Gen. i. 26; *And God said, Let us make man in our own image.*

Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? But were there not ready, millions of these winged messengers? What need then of such a word? True; angels were ready, but a man was sought. God, vouchsafing to send an embassy to men, will send one that might speak their language to them, and might stay and treat with them in a familiar, friendly way, an ambassador in ordinary, to lie still and treat with them. And in this condescension much wisdom and love appear. He will take men, subject to the like infirmities and pollutions with the people, as the prophet here acknowledges, but one purged from these pollutions, made holy; though not perfectly, yet eminently holy. This is very suitable, were not men invincibly obstinate, more suitable than that God should send by angels, that one of themselves should come and deal with men for God, and bear witness of his graciousness and readiness to forgive, so as to give himself for an instance of it, and say, "I have found him so." And they being changed and sanctified show really that the thing may be done; that it is feasible to sanctify a sinner; and so sinful men appear to be fitter for this service than embodied angels.

Then said I, Here am I; send me. What a blessed change was wrought on Paul when cast to the ground! His own will was broken all to pieces, and now he is only for his service, whose name he so hated, and whose servants he persecuted. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* These are the very words and characters of a true convert. And thus the soul turned to Christ may in some cases doubt what is his will, but that once resolved, there is no deliberation whether to do it or not. He says not, "If the service be honourable or profitable, that is, carry-

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ing worldly credit or profit in it, then will I do it;" no, but, "Whatever it is, if it be thine, and thou appoint me to it, *here am I.*" And this makes the meanest work of his station excellent.

Then said I, Here am I. A strange change in the prophet; even but now an undone man, and here presently a ready messenger, and so turned to an angel. Something of this most find who are truly called to this high work of delivering messages from God. Sometimes, a sense of pollution benumbs and strikes them dead, and anon again they feel the flame of love kindled by that coal, quickening them to such a readiness and such free offers of themselves to service, as, to those who understand not the reason of it, would seem presumptuous forwardness. And there may be in some minds, at one and the same time, a strange mixture and counterworking of these two together; a sense of unfitness and unworthiness drawing back, and yet the strength of love driving forward, thinking thus, "How can I, who am so filthy, so vile, speak of God? Yet hath he shown me mercy? How then can I be silent?

Send me. Moses's reluctance this same prophet would have vented too, before the touch of the coal, while he said, *Woe is me! I am undone* or *struck down*, as the word may signify; he cannot speak with such unholy lips, of so holy a God. Isaiah cries out of *unclean lips*, as Moses complained of *stammering lips*. As this is fit to precede; first, a sense of extreme inability and unworthiness, and then upon a change and call, ready obedience. A man once undone and dead, and then recovered, is the only fit messenger for God. In such a one, love overcomes all difficulties both without and within, and in his work, no constraint is he feeling but that of love; and where that is, no other will be needed. The sweet, all powerful constraint of love will send thee all cheerful, though it were through fire or water. No water can quench it, nor fire outburn it. It burns hotter than any other kindled against it. After the touch of that coal, no forbearing. So Jer. xx. 9; *But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing: I could not stay. Feed the flock of God which is among*

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you, says St Peter, *taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, yet of a ready mind.* Yet the prophet says, *Send me.* Though he had so adrent a desire and readiness to go, yet he will not go unsent, but humbly offers himself, and waits both for his commission and instructions: and how awful are they!

Ver. 9. *And he said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not: and see ye indeed, but perceive not.*

10. *Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

His message, you see, is most sad, and so he is put to it, put to the trial of his obedience, as men usually are according to the degree of their fitness. Nothing is more sweet to a messenger, than to have good news to carry. O it is a blessed, sweet thing to convert souls! But how heavy to harden them by preaching! Yet thus it is to many at some times, and almost generally to all. Certainly, before this, much had been heard and despised. They had been hardening their own hearts, and now they shall have enough of it; their very sin shall be their plague, a plague of all others the most terrible, yet as was said above, there are times of the height of this plague, as of others, and this was one of those times of its raging mortality. The prophet did nothing but preach, and yet they were stupified by it. And indeed wherever the word does not soften and quicken, it hardens and kills; and the more lively the ministry of the word is where it works this effect the more deeply doth it work it.

This was verified on the Jews. Though they were then God's own people, yet it was verified on them to the utmost. And this context is often cited against them in the New Testament; no place so often. So excellent a preacher as Isaiah, and so well reputed amongst his people, yet was sent to preach them blind, and deaf, and dead. And this same does the gospel to most of many a congregation in Scotland; and the more of Christ that is spoken,

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the more are unbelievers hardened. Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the prophets, was yet brought to this, *Who hath believed our report?* Yea, this was fulfilled in the preaching of Christ himself; as the hotter the sun the more is the clay hardened.

Go tell this people. Observe the mighty power of the word, to whatsoever it is sent. As it is wonderfully efficacious for softening, melting, reducing to God, so, if it be sent to harden, is it efficacious to seal to judgment, to bring in and hasten it; and therefore it is spoken of as effecting the things it speaks: as in Jer. i. 10; *See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant.* So, Ezek. xliii. 3; and Hos. vi. 5. Therefore despise it not. Spiritual judgments are the heaviest of all: though least felt for a time, yet they stick closest and prove saddest in the end. The not feeling is a great part of the plague: in this is the nature and malignity of the disease, that it takes away the sight and sense of other things, and of itself. The plague is a disease seizing on the spirits, and therefore is so dangerous; but this seizes on the spirit of the mind: and is any thing so dreadful? O any plague but that of the heart! People think it a good thing not to feel the word, not to be troubled. Well, as they love this, they are filled with it, and shall have enough of it. God is righteous and pure in this. There are many cavils about his working on the heart to harden, which arise from an ignorant, low conceit of God, as of a dependent being, or tied to laws, or to give account. We ought rather to tremble before him. *He doth no iniquity,* and we shall be forced to confess it. Many ways of his are obscure, but none are unjust. Find we not this people sit under the sound, and are not many of them as if absent, as if they had never heard such things spoken of; so grossly ignorant of all these things? *Hearing they hear, but understand not.* Others are yet worse; they get a kind of knowledge, but it is dead and works nothing. These *see,* and yet *perceive not,* and know not even what they know. Most are of this sort, and they are of all others the worst to convince. When they are told of Christ and forgive-

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ness of sins, and are entreated to believe these mysteries, they cry out, "O we do, we know them, and can answer, if you ask us, what these doctrines are." But the heart is not changed, no sin is forsaken, no study of holiness, no flame of love. This not perceiving is the great judgment of this land; this the great cause of lamentation, that Christ is so much known, and yet known so little. People do not think whither it tends, and what the importance of this message is. They hear it as a passing tale, or, at the best as for the present, a pleasing sound, a *lovely song*, and if by an able minister, as sung by a good voice; but no impression is made, it dies in the air, it enters not into their hearts to quicken them, and so their evil is the more deadly. O bemoan this; beg the removal of it above all judgments; and pray for the sending forth of that Spirit, who causes *the mountains to flow down*. Many of you, my brethren, may be under somewhat of this, as there are divers degrees of it ere it comes to be incurable. O pray to be delivered, lest it grow so far that it be in vain to bid you do so. Better to be cast into extreme terrors for a time, than to continue thus. Better to fall into a fever, than into this lethargy, which makes you sleep to death.

Convert, and be healed. These two go together. All miseries are healed, and grace and favour flow forth, when once the soul is stirred up to seek after God, and turn unto him. Other courses of healing public or private evil are but mountebank cures, which vex and torment, as unapt physic does, and do no good; yea, make things worse than before. See Hosea, v. 13, compared with vi. 1. *When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrians, and sent to king Jareb; yet he could not heal you, not cure you of your wound.—Come and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.*

There is much in a custom of fruitless hearing, to stupify and make hard, to make men sermon proof. And the hearing of the most excellent hardens most, both against them, and against all others that are their inferiors: for being accustomed to hear the most moving strains unmoved, makes them scorn and easily beat back

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that which is less pressing. A largely endued and very spiritual minister is either one of the highest blessings or heaviest curses that can come upon a people.

Hearing, hear not. This even the ministers themselves may fall under: speakers may have no ears; as the Italian proverb says of preachers, they do not hear their own voice. They may grow hard, by custom of speaking of divine things without divine affection; so that nothing themselves or others say can work on them. Hence it is that so few formal dead ministers are converted, that one said, "Raro vidi clericum pœnitentem" so hardened are they against the means of conviction, in which they have been so long conversant, and not converted by them. They have been speaking so often of heaven and hell, and of Jesus Christ, and feeling nothing of them, that the words have lost their power, and they are grown hard as the skin of leviathan, *esteeming iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood.* And this by the way, besides that God's dispensation is so fixed, may be a reason why that sin mentioned in the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, is unpardonable. It is, in the nature of things, without such a miracle as God will not exert, impossible, that they who have stood out such things in vain should be renewed. This should make us who are ministers especially to tremble at an unholy life, or at the thought of declining from those ways of religion, of which we have known so much, and for which we have so many means of improvement.

Ver. 11. *Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate.*

12. *And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.*

Now this judgment fastening was sure to draw on all other judgments. Therefore the prophet, touched with compassion, inquires, *How long?* and receives a very sad answer, *Until the cities be wasted.* God is sovereignly free in this; but usually he keeps this course, that long

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continued and spared sinning makes long continued calamities when they come. Judgments, as the ancients thought comets to be, are as lasting as the matter is they are kindled with; and truly upon this account, we may justly apprehend that our troubles are but just beginning, rather than near their end. Yet repentance might prevail for the shortening of them. Those sweet showers soonest lay the stormy winds.

And this consideration may have something hopeful in it, that in these latter times things move something more speedily, as natural motions do towards their end; for *a short work will God make upon the earth*, as the apostle's word is; and we see in our particular straits that were greatest, that the Lord hath made them short even beyond our expectation; and what remains is in his hand. I trust he will hasten the defeat of the plots and power of his enemies; and doubt not all the late and present commotions of these poor kingdoms are the birth-pangs of a happy deliverance and peace, and when they grow thickest, it is nearest the birth.

How long? Observe the compassion of the messengers of God, not desiring the evil day, but mourning for it; pitying those they denounce judgment against, and melting for those they harden.

Till the cities be wasted. This intimates there would be no relenting under all these judgments, but that these, as well as the word and together with it, would harden them more, till they were almost consumed. And this is usual. Men think it would be otherwise, but it is found that times of great plagues and judgments are not times of great conversion. Men are then more hardened both against the word and the rod; their spirits grow stiff and obdurate in a kind of desperation. But mercy, coming as the spring sunshine, mollifies and dissolves, and makes fruitful; therefore such a day is to be longed for. I suspect we shall not see much done by the gospel till then: and before that we may suffer yet more dismal things, and be wasted with pestilence, sword, and famine. Yet there is comfort in this, the Lord will not make a full end of us: *a tenth* shall be left; and if not we, yet at least our posterity shall reap the sweet fruits of our bitter calamities, which are the just fruits of our iniquities.

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Ver. 13. *But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten; as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves; so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.*

THERE is still a remnant holy to God, the preservers of a land from utter ruin. Profane persons despise the children of God, and know not that they are beholden to them for the subsistence of the land and of the world: they are as those oaks, whose roots did bear up the earth of that highway that went between the king's house and the temple, as the resemblance is taken by some.

In judgments, the Lord remembers this. *Destroy it not, there is a blessing in it.* As for the personal condition of believers, there may be a great decay, a winter visage may be upon it; but yet the holy seed abideth in them, and is their stability, and still that word is true that is borrowed hence, "The holy seed, the subsistence or establishment of the earth." When their number is completed, time shall end, and this visible world shall be set on fire. And this day is hastening forward, though most of us think but little, if at all, of it.

ROMANS XII.

Ver. 3. *For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*

BESIDES the common word of edification implying it, we find often in the scriptures, teaching compared to building; and, amongst other things, the resemblance holds in this, that in both, of necessity, there is a foundation first to be laid, and then the structure to be raised upon it. He that gives rules of life, without first fixing principles of faith, offers preposterously at building a house without laying a foundation; and he that instructs what to believe, and directs not withal a believer how to live, doth in vain lay a foundation without following out the building. But the apostles were not such foolish

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builders, as to sever these two in their labours in the church. In this epistle, we find our apostle excellently acquitting himself in both these. He first largely and firmly lays the groundwork in the foregoing part of the epistle; now he adds exhortations and direction touching the particular duties of Christians.

The first thing, certainly, to be done with a soul, is to convince it of sin and death, then to address and lead it unto Christ, our righteousness and life; this done it should be taught to follow him. This is Christianity, *to live in Christ*, and *to live to Christ;* to live in him by faith, and to live to him in holiness. These our apostle joined in his doctrine, viii. 1; *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The exhortation that begins this chapter hath in it the whole sum of Christian obedience, fitly expressed and strongly urged; and in that are all particular rules comprised.

But because of our ignorance and our sloth, we do not always readily draw forth particulars from those comprehensive general rules wherein they lie; we need therefore to be assisted in this; and to this the Scriptures descend, particularly the apostles in their epistles, and that usually in the latter part of them. And this is a main part of our duty in preaching the word, often to represent these rules to you; not so much that you may understand them better, though somewhat of this likewise may be needful, as that you may remember them, and eye them more, and walk according to them; and there is no more in these things truly known, than what is known after this manner. I have endeavoured in the course of my teaching to reach this end. My design, and I hope yours likewise, hath been, not to pass so much time, nor to pass it with empty delight, which in other things might be done at an easy rate, but that you be really built up heavenwards, and increase with the increase of God; that the truth and power of Christianity may possess our hearts, and grow there, and may be evident in our lives, to the glory of our Lord Jesus.

We shall endeavour to lay before you the particular graces that are the ornaments of Christians; and this,

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not that you may look on them simply and commend them, but that you may pursue them, and be clothed with them, and then they will be much more comely and commendable; as a robe of rich apparel, if it seem fine while it hangs or lies by, it appears far better when it is put on.

The rules the apostle is about to give, he prefaces thus, *For I say, through the grace given to me;* I speak as the messenger or apostle of Christ, according to that knowledge and experience that he hath given me of these things; and so take it, as from one that hath some interest in and share of these graces I recommend to you. And this indeed makes recommendations carry home. O that we could truly say this! Alas! it is an uncomfortable and commonly an unprofitable thing, to speak of Christ and the graces of his Spirit, only as having heard of them, or read of them, as men that travel in their studies do of foreign countries.

Through the grace given unto me. The apostle represents this to add the more authority and gain the more acceptance to what he had to say; and for this end, some care is to be had of the good opinion of people, so far as their interest is concerned, that the message we bring be not prejudged: otherwise, this truly set aside, it were little matter how we were mistaken or despised, yea, it were a thing someway desirable; only provided nothing be done on purpose, that may justly, yea or that may probably, procure it, for that both piety and charity forbid.

To every man. This is more pressing than if he had said simply, *to you,* or generally, *to you all;* for in men's talking of things, it proves often too true, what is said to all, is said to no one; but *to every one,* that each one may suppose it spoken to him, as an ingenious picture looking to each in the room. Thus we ought to speak, and thus ye ought to hear—we to speak, not as telling some unconcerning stories, but as having business with you; and *you* to hear, not each for another, as you often do—"O such a passage touched such a one,"—but each for himself.

The first particular, the apostle recommends, is that gracing grace of humility, the ornament and the safety of

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all other graces, and which is so peculiarly Christian. Somewhat philosophers speak of temperance, justice, and other like virtues, but these tend rather to blow up and swell the mind with big conceit and confidence of itself, than to dwell together with self abasement and humility. But in the school of Christ, the first lesson of all is self denial and humility; yea it is written above the door, as the rule of entry or admission, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.* And out of all question, that is truly the humblest heart, which hath most of Christ in it.

Not to think highly. Not aspiring and intending in things too high. And a great point of humility is, subjection to God in the point of knowledge. In this was our first climbing that proved our fall; and yet still, amidst all our ignorance and darkness, we are catching and gaping after the deadly fruit of unhallowed knowledge.

This withal hath in it the attempering of our thoughts and practices to our measure and station; to know our selves truly and thoroughly: for that will certainly beget a very low esteem of ourselves, to judge ourselves the unworthiest and meanest of all.

And having truly this estimate of ourselves, we shall not vainly attempt any thing above our reach, nor disdainfully neglect any thing that is within the compass of our calling and duty; which are the two evils so common among men, yea, even amongst Christians, and in the church of God, and are the cause of most of the enormities and disorders that fall out in it. It is a strange blindness, that they who do grossly miscarry in the duties of their own station, yet so readily fancy themselves capable of somewhat higher, and think themselves wronged, if it be refused them.

The self-knowing Christian would rather descend, and find himself very disproportioned to his present station, be it never so mean. He can say with David, *Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.* But vain minds would still be tampering with the greatest affairs, and dwell not with themselves. O my brethren, be entreated to study your own hearts better.

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Be less abroad in things that concern you not. There is work enough within you; heaps of base lusts, and self deceits, and follies, that you see not yet; and many advantages of good things you seem to see in yourselves, that indeed are not there. Self love is a flattering glass, which represents us to ourselves much fairer than we are; therefore turn from it, if you desire a true account of yourselves, and look into the pure and faithful mirror of God's law. O what deformities will that discover, which you never saw nor thought of before. It will make you the lowest of all persons in your own eyes.

This low self esteem doth not wholly take away the simple knowledge of what gifts and graces God hath bestowed on a man; for that were to make him both unthankful and unuseful. "Qui se nescit, nescit se uti." He who doth not know what God hath freely given him, cannot return praise to God, nor make use of himself for God in his station. Yea, the apostle's caution intimates a sober, humble reflection on the measure God hath given a man, as what he not only allows but requires; and himself gives example of it in his own present expression, declaring that he speaks these things *through the grace that is given* to him.

But this knowledge of a man's own gifts and graces, that it may not preclude his attaining more, but help him to more in the humble acknowledgment and use of what he hath, should have these two qualifications; *first*, that he beware of overweening; that he take his measure much below, rather than any whit beyond what he truly hath; *secondly*, that whatsoever it is, he always look on it not as his own, but as God's, having his superscription on it, and all the glory of it being his peculiar tribute; nothing of that to be interrupted or retained: *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory;* still all the glory entirely sent up to him. Thus, here, the apostle sets all grace in that view, *As God hath dispensed the measure;* and so speaks of his own, *Through the grace given to me.* Still is it so to be looked on, not as what we have, but as what he hath given. That is the gospel style, *Grace, free gifts.* Whereas philosophy speaks of all as habits, or havings, or possessions.

Now, viewed in that relative dependant notion of freely given, a man will never be puffed up by any endowments,

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though he see and know them; yea, the more he knows them thus, he will be the more humble still, as being the more obliged. The more he hath received, the greater they are, the lower he bows, pressed down under the weight of his engagements to God: as Abraham *fell on his face,* when *God talked with him,* and made such rich promises to him, Gen. xvii. 3. See David's strain, 1 Chron. xxix. 15; *But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.* This, the apostle gives as the sovereign preservative against the swelling poison of self conceit, *What hast thou that thou didst not receive?*

He who is thus regulated in his own esteem will, by this certainly be moderated in his desire of esteem from others, and cannot well meet with any thing that way, that will either puff him up or cast him down: if overprized by others, he takes that as their mistake; if undervalued, he rejoices in that, having set himself so low in himself, that others cannot well set him lower. So when men account meanly of him, they are really of his own opinion; and you know that offends none, but pleases them rather to have others agree with their opinions and be of their mind.

They who are busy after reputation and would be esteemed, are but begging voices; they would have others think with them, and confirm the conclusion they have already resolved on in favour of themselves; and this is a most foolish thing: for disappointed in this, men are discontented, and so their peace hangs on others' fancies; and if satisfied with it, they surfeit and undo themselves with the delight of it. Bees sometimes kill themselves with their own honey; and there is such a word to this purpose; *It is not good to eat much honey; so for men to search their own glory is not glory.*

Ver. 4, 5. *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

IN this consideration, we have God's wisdom manifested, and are instructed what is our wisdom. He, in the great world, made all by weight, number, and measure; so, in

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the lesser world, man, and in the new world, his church, he proportions all to the use he hath designed them for. He could give to them who had least more than the very greatest have, but he thought this unfit. It might be some advantage to them, yet to the whole body not so; and therefore not truly so to them neither, being parts of it, and having their good involved in the good of the body.

This resemblance is often used in scripture, and holds excellently well, but is little learned. Our temper and carriage correspond not to it. Who is there almost that finds it, the Spirit of Christ in them, knitting them to him as the common head, and one to another as one in him; each busy to advance him, and so seeking his glory and to promote the good of one another? But, alas! each is for self, accursed self, as of an independent divided substance; yea, worse—hating and tearing one another—a monstrous sight, as if one limb of the same body should be pulling another to pieces. It signifies little to tell men what mutual tenderness there is in nature; that for a thorn in the foot the back bows, the head stoops, the eyes look, the hands feel, and seek it to pull it out. Christians are still so rigid, so unchristian to each other, they drive one another with the thorn sticking in, forcing their brethren to ways against the persuasions of their consciences.

In the following verses, 6, 7, 8, we have a specification of divers offices, and the duties of them; the due observance of which is essential to the peace and growth of the church, makes all go on sweetly and fruitfully. But men are either presumptuously or preposterously busy out of their own station, or slothfully negligent in it; and both these, instead of edifying, are discomposing and destroying things.

Not to insist on the distinction of offices, it is evident, in all enumerations of this kind, that the same word sometimes means divers things, and divers words mean the same thing; as *ministry* may comprise all, though sometimes peculiar to deacons sometimes taken for teachers or pastors. Here it is general, and the particulars following distribute it. Some are to teach, which is doctorial; some to exhort, which is more pastoral; some are to give,

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which is proper to deacons; some have their whole charge to rule, as elders; some are particularly for attendance on the sick.

But in all, fidelity and sedulity are requisite. How high soever men are placed, if they are unfaithful, the higher judgment awaits them. How low soever, if thou be sincere and studious of thy duty, thou shalt sustain no loss by thy low station, but rather thy faithfulness will be the more set off by it: *He that is faithful in little, shall be made ruler over much.* O that we were more eaten up with zeal of our Lord's house and winning of souls, whom he deputes to that! O that they who rule would study more rule of their own houses, that should go before, and of their own hearts, that should be first of all! Alas! how shall men whose passion and lusts rule them, well rule the house of God? Be afraid and wise, ye who are called to that, and know, at length, what is so generally either unknown or unconsidered, the exemplary holiness required in your persons, and the diligent watchfulness over the flock of God. There are many debates, and troubles, and pains about these our liberties, but little diligence in the use of them. Congregations are still as full of impiety and profaneness as ever. O take heed, lest we thus forfeit them after all they have cost, and provoke God to bereave us of them! Men are busy, who, we know, are not friends to the church of God. But O that we were more careful to be on good terms with him! *If he be for us, who can be against us?* It is no matter who be; he is too wise and too strong for them all.

Ver. 9. *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

THE whole sum of the law is love; love to God, and love to man: these two contain all, and the former of the two contains the latter. Love to God is the only true principle and spring of all due love to man; and all love that begins there, returns thither likewise, and ends there.

The engaging of the whole mind and soul to the love of God does not engross it so, that there should be no kind of love communicable to man; on the contrary, it is to refine it, that it may flow forth the purer and better. All love should be first called in to God, to be sublimated and

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purified there, and then set in its right channel and motion, so as man may be loved in him and for him; not to impair our love to him, but indeed to extend and act it as he allows. And so to love man is to love God, that love taking its rise from him and terminating in him; and in this circle is the proper motion of celestial divine love.

The duty then here meant and commanded is this, *that we love one another*. And our love must be thus qualified —it must be unhypocritical and sincere, such as, though it may consist with, yet doth not wholly consist in, civilities of expression and behaviour, but a real benevolence of soul and good will to all—a love disposing us readily to forgive evil, and to do good upon all occasions.

Yet this is not such a tendency of complacency as to partake with any in any evil ways. O no. *Abhor that which is evil;* fly from it with indignation, with a kind of antipathy. And thus it will be from the new nature in a Christian, the Holy Spirit of Christ, which cannot endure the unholiness or impurity of the world, but is chased away, as doves by noisome smells, or bees by smoke. This delicacy of spirit profane men laugh at, as a weak, foolish meanness; but, fools as they are, they know not that it arises from that highest *wisdom which is from above*, which indeed is *peaceable*, but first is *pure*, and can admit of no peace nor agreement with any persons or things that are impure. This is to be like the all-wise God, with whom *wickedness cannot dwell*. His pure eyes cannot pleasantly behold any iniquity.

Much of the love of God would work more hatred of sin. But if thy hatred of evil be right, know, it will begin at home; as we feel aversions and abhorrences most, when the things are nearest us. It is not the upright nature of holiness to hate sin in others, and to hug it or spare it in thyself, whether the same kind of sin or any other; for if this abhorrence be right, it is against all sin, the whole; and it is most against it, where nearest in thyself. It is the true divine fire of zeal, kindled by the love of God, that burns up sin, but first that which is nearest it, as a fire in the hearth does, and so reaches what is further off. But if thy zeal fly most abroad upon others, it is an unruly disordered wildfire, cracking and squibbing up and down, good for nothing but to set houses and towns on fire.

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Cleave to that which is good. This expresses a vehement and inseparable affection; loving and rejoicing in all the good thou seest in others; desiring and seeking after all the good thou canst attain unto thyself; and being more pleased with the society of godly persons than any other, such as will put thee and keep thee most in mind of thy home and the way thither, and admonish and reduce thee from any declining steps. Their reproofs are more sweet to thee, than the laughter and flattery of profane men: as one said to his master, "Thou shalt find no staff hard enough to beat me from thee." Though they seem harsh to thee, yet wilt thou say, *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness.* And no opposition will drive thee from the truth of God and his ways, which are only good, if thy heart be once glued by love and fastened to them. Yea, thou wilt cleave the closer to it, the more thou art persecuted for the truth; and the more thou sufferest for it, wilt love it the better. The word that is used in marriage, of the husband cleaving to the wife, holds true in the soul once married to that which is good: all violence will be too weak to sever thee. Learn to know what this is that is truly good, to know the excellency and sweetness of holiness, and it will be impossible to part thy affection from it. But this is the reason why men are so soon shaken, and the slender hold they have removed; the superficies of the soul only is tied to the outside of religion, by some external relations and engagements, and these are a running knot that easily slips. Few *receive the truth in the love of it*, and have their hearts united to Jesus Christ, who is indeed all that good we have to seek after and to cleave to.

Ver. 10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*

Now in this way of holy spiritual affection, seeking the true good one of another, be kind in brotherly love; not upon design of particular interest, but by a natural propension, such as is in creatures towards their young; such a tenderness as is amongst men of nearest relations, parents and children, and brethren; and know that you are indeed brethren of the highest birth and parentage, and so, beyond all brethren, Christians are obliged to love

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one another. Alas! that in them, likewise, it should prove so unhappily true, that the love of brethren is rare; that they should be so hardly drawn to acts of love, and so easily stirred to fits of anger and bitterness, one towards another! My beloved, are we Christians? Oh, where is the spirit of Christ? Where that great law of his, that badge of his followers, *Love one another;* that, by which the Christians of the first times astonished the Pagans about them? Yea, their very enemies and persecutors were amazed at it. It were well, and would be one considerable gain by our enemies, if their combinations and malice against the godly might drive them close together, and unite them more to one another in love.

In honour preferring one another; putting all possible respect on one another; this not in ceremony or compliment, though those civilities that are due, and done without feignedness or affectation, are not disallowed, yea, are, I conceive, included; but in matter of real esteem, each *preferring one another:* for though a man may see the weakness of those he converses with, yet passing, and as far as he can, covering these, he ought to take notice of what is good. All have something commendable, and no one hath all; so the meanest may in something be preferable to the highest. And Christian humility and charity will seek out for and espy that, and for it put all respect upon them, that their quality and station are able to bear; and in this, one should prevent another, and strive who shall do most in this kind, as a good and happy contention.

And the source of this is love to God, which so mortifies the heart to all outward advantages, that, further than a man is tied by place and calling, he would not receive, much less desire, any kind of respect from any, but had rather be slighted and disregarded. What cares a soul enamoured with the glory to come, for the vain passing air of preference and honour here? That it can easily bate to any, and, so far as a man has any power of it, would put it upon others, far rather than own it himself. Such a one can sweetly please himself in being the meanest in all companies where he comes, and passing for such, and he is glad of respect done to others; still looking homeward, where there is no prejudicing one another at all, but

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perfect unenvying and unenvied glory. Glory here is to be shunned rather than pursued, and if it will follow, yet is less to be regarded than thy shadow. O how light and vanishing is it, and even things more solid than it! *The fashion of this world passeth away.*

Ver. 11. *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.*

Not slothful in business. These condensed rules have much in them; and this one is very needful, for often a listless, indisposed weariness overtakes even good men. Seeing so little to be done to any purpose, they are almost ready to give over all; yet they ought to bestir themselves, and apply to diligence in their place. Be not unduly stickling and busy in things improper, but enclosing thy diligence within thy sphere. Suffer it not to stand, but keep it there in motion. As to thy worldly affairs, be so diligent as to give them good dispatch, when thou art about them; but have thy heart as little in them, as much disengaged, as may be; yet so acquitting them wisely, they shall trouble thee the less, when thou art in higher and better employments. As to thyself, be often examining thy heart and ways, striving constantly against sin; though little sensible advantage be gained, yet if thou yield, it will be worse: if it prevail so much amidst all thy opposition, what would it do if thou shouldst sit still? Use all holy means, how fruitless soever they seem for the present, and *wait on God. We have toiled all night*, said Simon, *and taken nothing.* And yet, at his command, essaying again, they took more at once, than if, after their ordinary way, they had been taking all night. So, as to others, give not up because thou seest no present success, but, in thy place, *admonish*, *exhort*, and *rebuke*, with all meekness and patience. Doth God wait on sinners, and wilt not thou wait a little for others.

Fervent in spirit. Beware of a fretful impatience. That is a sickly distempered heat, as that of a fever, which makes a man unfit for work, and men commonly in this break away from their business: but much healthful natural heat makes a man strong and able to endure labour, and continue in it. This is the thing here recommended. To be so hot and *fervent in spirit* is a great advantage;

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it is the very strength of the soul in all employments. Much love to God and desire of his glory,—this is the heat that will not weary, will cheerfully go through all discouragements: *many waters will not quench it.* This fervour of spirit, wrought by the Spirit of God, doth clearly distinguish itself from that inordinate heat of our spirits, which may sometimes either act alone, or mingle itself with the other in the best causes and affairs. This holy fervour is composed and regular in working, runs not headily to unadvised or disorderly ways. It is a sweet delightful heat, not painful and vexing as the other. It carries on to duty, and is not disturbed about events.

Serving the Lord. Some copies have it, *Serving the time,* which may bear a fair construction of taking present occasions of good, and being useful in our generation, and accommodating ourselves in all lawful things to times and persons for their good, as our apostle *became all things to all: to win some:* yet this kind of expression not being found elsewhere in scripture, and the most copies having it as we read it, and some mistake of letters in transcribers seeming to have occasioned it, it is much rather to be taken as in our version.

But, out of all question, some do follow that mistaken reading in its worst sense; instead of *serving the Lord,* serving the times. And this some do even in evil ways; others in ways that are good, yet following upon trust, and complying, though unwillingly, because the times carry things so; but when times change to the worse, these men are discovered, for still they serve their master, the times, and their own advantage in them; which way soever that goes, they follow; so that their following the better side in better times is but accidental.

But this *serving the Lord* is more even and lasting; serving him still in all times, doing all for him, having no aim but his glory. Such a heart cannot be diverted from its course by any counterblast of times.

Would you be steadfast in times of approaching trial? Seek to have your hearts acquainted with God, and fixed on him; for others will be shaken; but such will follow him through all hazards, and fear no ill while he is with them.

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Ver. 12. *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.*

Rejoicing in hope. O, this we seldom do. When are our hearts as if transported with the blessed *hope of our inheritance?* This would make us what follows—

Patient in tribulation. People would hear much of this, of preparing for suffering. There may be a distemper in desiring to hear and speak so much of this. What though trials be coming, as it is likely they are, we should account too much of ourselves and this present world, to dwell expressly on that subject. We see the apostles do not so, though they lived and wrote in times of another sort of persecution than we have yet seen; and they, to whom the apostle here writes, lived where it was most violent and potent, and yet they spend not all on this: some brief words of it are interspersed with the discourse, thrown as it were into a parenthesis; but still the main is, the doctrine of faith and rules of holiness. And these are indeed the great furniture for all sufferings: I know no other. To see much of the excellency and worth of Jesus Christ, and the riches of our hope in him; to have these in our view, much in our hearts and in our mouths—these drown all the little fears of present things. See how, in passing, our apostle speaks, as it were, in a slighting way of all sufferings for him: I have cast it up, says he, and *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time*, of this Now, *are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Again; the other thing is the rules of holiness. These powerfully enable for suffering any thing rather than unholiness. That sickness of the soul, those corrupt humours of sin, make it crazy, so that it can endure no blasts of air; but when it is purged and freed from these, and in communion with God in his ways, then it is healthful and strong, and so is able to endure any thing. The mortifying of our affections to the world—that is what enables for suffering. Whither reaches the cruelty of man, but to thy goods or thy body? And what makes any faint, but an over esteem of these, by which they are filled with desires to preserve and fears to lose them? Now when the heart is disengaged from these, and hath

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taken up in God, is rich and content in him, it stands not much to the courtesy of any: let them take the rest, *it suffers with joy the spoiling of goods, having in heaven a more enduring substance.* And for the utmost, killing them, they look on it as the highest favour. It is to them but the making a hole for them in the prison wall to get out at. Therefore I say there is nothing doth so fit for all encounters, as to be much instructed in that which is the substance of Christianity, hearts purified, and lives holily and spiritually regulated. In a word, much study of Christ and much study of thyself, for ought I know, are the wisest and strongest preparatives for all possible sufferings.

How sweetly can the soul retire into him and repose in him, in the greatest storms! I know nothing that can much dismay him who can believe and pray. That, you see, is added—

Continuing instant in prayer. If afraid of fainting, yea, if at the point of fainting, this revives the soul, draws in no less than the strength of God to support it: and what then can surcharge it?

Thy access to him, all the enemies in the world cannot hinder. The closest prison shuts not out thy God; yea, rather it shuts out other things and companies that thou mayest have the more leisure for him, and the sweeter converse with him. O acquaint yourselves with this exercise of prayer, and by it with God, that if days of trouble come, you may know whither to go, and what way; and if you know this way, whatever befalls you, you are not much to be bemoaned.

PSALM IV.

TITLE. *To the chief Musician on Neginoth, a Psalm of David.*

MANY of the calamities of good men look like miseries, which yet on the whole appear to have conduced greatly to their happiness; witness the many prayers which they poured out in those calamities, the many seasonable and shining deliverances which succeeded them, and the many hymns of praise they sang to God their Deliverer: so

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that they seem to have been cast into the fire on purpose that the odour of their graces might diffuse itself all abroad.

The seventy Greek interpreters seem to have read the word which we render *to the chief musician*, something different from the reading of our present Hebrew copy, that is *Lemenetz*, instead of *Lemenetzoth*; and therefore they render it εἰς τέλος, as the Latin copy does, *in finem*, to the end. From whence the Greek and Latin fathers imagined that all the psalms which bear this inscription refer to the Messiah, the great End and the accomplishment of all things; a sentiment which was rather pious than judicious, and led them often to wrest several passages in the psalms by violent and unnatural glosses. Yet I would not morosely reject all interpretations of this kind, seeing the apostles themselves apply to Christ many passages out of the psalms and other books of the Old Testament, which, if we had not been assured of it by their authority, we should hardly have imagined to have had any reference to him. Nor is it probable that they enumerated all the predictions of the Messiah which are to be found in the prophetic writings, but only a very small part of them, while they often assure us that all the sacred writers principally centre in him. And it is certain the passage out of this psalm, which Austin and some others suppose to refer to Christ, may be applied to him without any force upon the expression: *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?* And what follows they explain with the same reference: *Know that the Lord has in a wonderful manner separated his Holy One unto himself.*

Others however render the title in a different manner—*Victori*, to the conqueror. Moderns translate it *præcentori* or *præfecto musicæ*, to the chief musician, or him who presided over the band of musicians; which after all seems the most natural interpretation. The word *Neginoth*, which is sometimes rendered stringed instruments, did no doubt signify instruments of music which were struck to give their sound, as *Nehiloth* in the title of Psalm v. seems, though not without some little irregularity in the etymology, to signify instruments of wind music. The psalm was written by David, as a summary

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of the prayer he had poured out before God, when some exceeding great affliction seem to besiege him on every side, whether it was the persecution of Saul or the conspiracy of Absalom, his son.

Ver. 1. *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me and hear my prayer.*

Hear me. Behold the sanctuary, to which this good man betook himself in all the afflictions of his life: a sanctuary which therefore he sets off, by accumulating a variety of expressive titles, all to the same purpose, in Psal. xviii. 2. *My rock, my fortress, my strength, my deliverer, my buckler, the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.* He is indeed a place of refuge to his children; and therefore, as Solomon expresses it *in the fear of the Lord is a strong confidence.* There seems something of an enigma in that expression—confidence in fear; yet the thing itself is most true. And again. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* And they who know not this refuge are miserable; and when any danger arises, they run hither and thither, as Antoninus beautifully expresses it, "They fly and flutter they know not whither." The life of man upon earth is a warfare; and it is much better in the midst of enemies and dangers to be acquainted with one fortress, than with many inns. He that knows how to pray, may be pressed, but cannot be overwhelmed.

Hear me, O Lord, hear my prayer. He did not think it enough to have said this once; but he redoubled it. He who prays indeed is seriously engaged in the matter; and not only seriously but vehemently too, and urges the address, because he himself is urged by the necessities and difficulties, and the ardent motion of his own desire and affection. And let it be observed that these are the only prayers that mount on high, and offer a kind of grateful violence to heaven. Nor does the divine goodness grant any thing with greater readiness and delight, than the blessings which seem, if I may be allowed the expression, to be forced out and extorted by the most fervent prayer. So that Tertullian used to say, that,

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"when we pray eagerly, we do as it were combine in a resolute band, and lay siege to God himself." These are the perpetual sacrifices in the temple of God, rational victims—prayers and intermingled vows, flowing from an upright and pure heart. But he who presents his petitions coldly seems to bespeak a denial; for is it to be wondered at that we do not prevail on God to hear our prayers, when we hardly hear them ourselves while we offer them? How can we suppose that such devotions should penetrate heaven, or ascend up to it? How should they ascend when they do not so much as go forth from our own bosoms, but, like wretched abortions, die in the very birth? But why do I say that they do not go out from the inward recesses of our bosoms? Alas! they are only formed on the surface of our lips, and they expire there, quite different from what Homer ascribes to his wise and eloquent Ulysses, when he says,

"Forth from his breast he poured a mighty cry."

Thou God of my righteousness; thou, O God, who art righteous thyself, and art the patron of my righteousness, of my righteous cause and of my righteous life. For it is necessary that both should concur, if we desire to address our prayers to God with any confidence: not that, depending upon this righteousness, we should seek the divine aid and favour, as a matter of just debt; for then, as the apostle argues, *it were no more of grace.* Our prophet is certainly very far from boasting of his merits; for here he so mentions his righteousness, as at the same time to cast himself upon the divine mercy: *Have mercy upon me;* exercise thy propitious clemency towards me. And this is indeed the genuine temper of one who truly prays with sincerity and humility. *For polluted hands are an abomination to the Lord, and he hates the heart that is puffed up. He beholds the proud afar off,* as the celebrated parable of the Pharisee and publican is, you know, intended to teach us. *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* But *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and his countenance beholds the upright.* Whereas the words of the wicked, when he prays, are but as a fan or as bellows to blow up the divine displeasure into a flame; for how can he appease God, who

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does not at all please him; or how can he who utterly disregards his pure laws, and that holiness which is so dear to him?

Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress. I have often experienced both the riches of thy bounty, and the power of thy hand; and I derive confidence from thence, because thou art immutable, and canst never be wearied by rescuing thy servants from the dangers that surround them. The examples we have heard of divine aid granted to others in their distress, should animate us; as David recollected, Psalm xxii. 4; *Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them.* But our own personal experiences are later and nearer, and he who treasures them up in his memory, not only thereby expresses his gratitude to God, but wisely consults his own interest; for he enjoys all those benefits of the divine favour twice, or rather as often as he needs and pleases to renew the enjoyment of them; and he not only supports his faith in new dangers, by surveying God's former interpositions, but by laying them open before God in humble prayer, he more earnestly implores, and more effectually obtains new ones. By a secret kind of magnetism, he draws one benefit by another: he calls out, and as it were, allures the divine favour by itself.

Thou hast enlarged me. The redeemed of the Lord may especially say so, in reference to that grand and principal deliverance by which they are snatched from the borders of hell, from the jaws of eternal death. The remembrance of so great salvation may well excite songs of perpetual praise, to be ascribed to God the Deliverer; and by this deliverance, so much more illustrious than any of the rest, they may be encouraged in the confidence of faith, to urge and hope for the aids of his saving arm in every other exigence.

One thing more may be observed here, but it is so very obvious, that I shall only just mention it, as what needs not to be much inculcated—that he who has not been accustomed to prayer when the pleasant gales of prosperity have been breathing upon him, will have little skill and confidence in applying himself to it when the storms of adversity arise; as Xenophon well observed in the person of Cyrus.

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Ver. 2. *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.*

JUSTLY may we admire the force and the speed with which prayer flies up to heaven, and brings down answers from thence: "No sooner said than done," if not as to the accomplishment of the thing itself, which perhaps may be more opportune in some future hour, yet, at least, in clear firm hope, and strong confidence, sent from above into a praying soul. Prayer soars above the violence and impiety of men, and with a swift wing commits itself to heaven, with happy omen, if I may allude to what the learned tell us of the augury of the ancients, which I shall not minutely discuss. Fervent prayers stretch forth a strong wide-extended wing, and while the birds of night hover beneath, they mount aloft, and point out, as it were, the proper seats to which we should aspire. For certainly there is nothing that cuts the air so swiftly, nothing that takes so sublime, so happy, and so auspicious a flight as prayer, which bears the soul on its pinions, and leaves far behind all the dangers, and even the delights of this low world of ours. Behold this holy man, who just before was crying to God in the midst of distress, and with urgent importunity entreating that he might be heard, now, as if he were already possessed of all he had asked, taking upon him boldly to rebuke his enemies, how highly soever they were exalted, and how potent soever they might be even in the royal palace.

O ye sons of men. The Hebrew phrase here used, *Bene Isch*, properly speaking, signifies noble men and great men, as persons of plebeian rank are called *Bene Adam*. Whoever you are, and however illustrious by birth or inflated with pride, or perhaps formidable on both accounts, your greatness is false, and when it is most blown up, is most likely to burst. That is a sound and stable degree of honour, to which God has destined his servants, whom you insult and deride. The height of your honour and vanishing glory, from the exaltation of which you look down upon me, will, if you desire I should courageously speak the truth, only render your future fall more grievous and fatal, which he, whose destruction you seek with such insatiable rage, sees indeed, but does not wish; nay,

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he rather wishes that this misery may be averted from you, and that, by a return to the exercise of your right mind, it may be totally prevented; and therefore he gives you this admonition, lest, while you are deriding him, unexpected destruction should come upon you, and your laughter should prove of the sardonic kind, which nothing can quiet till it end in death. You have indeed great strength and deep counsel, but these things are only the blandishments of your ruin, and the splendid prelude to that misery which is hovering over you. You have spent time enough, and alas! how much more than enough, in giving chase to such vanities. At last regard the man who, in the most disinterested manner, admonishes you of the most important truths.

How long will ye turn my glory into shame? The septuagint appears to have read these words something different from our copies, but the sense is nevertheless much the same; and though the psalmist, in the affair which he had in view, speaks only of a few, the words themselves have such an expressive dignity and are in truth so unhappily extensive, that without doing any the least violence to them, they may be considered as an admonition to all mankind. *O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity and lies?* For indeed what are all those things which we foolish mortals pursue with such contention and ardour of spirit, but, as an ancient expresses it, "trifles that are but like the shadow of smoke?" But we are to speak of this hereafter. In the mean time, let us attend to the words before us, *How long will ye turn my glory into shame?*

The things which are the brightest ornaments of human nature, and which alone constitute its very glory, are holiness, piety, and faith; and these are treated as if they were the most despicable and ignominious things in the whole world. Among Christians, or those who are called by that name, it is the greatest of all scandals to be a Christian indeed. We have long since lost the true names of things; candid simplicity of manners is despised as rusticity; lively religion is called the delirious dream of superstitious notions; and gentleness, dulness and stupidity; while pride has usurped the name of magnanimity, and craft that of wisdom. Thus we turn true glory into

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shame, and shame into glory. And because few are able to discern what tends to their eternal happiness, they squander away the whole day of this short life in pursuing and catching at the false and fictitious forms of it; yea, they seek a lie, *lying vanity*. And they who heap up riches seem to be wise both to themselves and others; but O how far from it, and with how base a lie do they impose upon themselves! for these riches are spent upon gratifying their palate, and ministering in other respects to their luxury. Into how foul a gulf do they throw what they have laboured so eagerly to gain! Or if they hoard up their wealth, how soon do they pass over the property to their heirs! Men hunt after fame and vainglory, and, when they seem to have caught it, feed upon air, and become the slaves of all, even the meanest, for a thing of nought.

And as for pleasure, who is so senseless as not to know how deceitful a lie it proves at last? It drives men into a weak frenzy, to run after the most trifling objects of pursuit, which fly from them like bees, who, if they are taken, yield but a drop of honey, and repay the spoil of it with a painful sting; a sting which, alas! reaches the very heart. Religion is a high, sublime thing, royal, unconquerable, unwearied; but pleasure is low, servile, weak, and withering. Religion is neither attended by sickly disgust in the enjoyment, nor by bitter repentance in the reflection; but what the world calls pleasure is attended by both. Hear, my young friends, hear the divine voice of celestial wisdom calling you with fervent affection and a loud cry, from the trackless ways of error and precipices of misery. *How long*, does she say, *how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing?* He that seeks me shall not be wearied in running hither and thither, but shall find me sitting at his door and waiting admittance; and he who finds me needs seek nothing else, unless he be one whom a life of real happiness cannot satisfy. O that the indefatigable labour and industry, with which men pursue flattering and uncertain enjoyments, may stir up your minds to exert at least an equal diligence in this sublime and most blessed pursuit! For if, as St. Chrysostom speaks, it may seem indecent for me to press you further to such an attachment to these

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objects as they require, it will be a lovely thing to give it without further solicitation.

How long will ye love vanity and seek after leasing. Can any one deny that this is the character of almost every thing that is to be found in human life? Should a man proclaim this in every company with a loud voice, he would soon pass for a lunatic; but certainly, he might reproach them with the general madness which reigns among mankind, not only among the vulgar that he meets with in the streets, but the philosophers disputing in the school, the counsellors pleading in our courts of judicature, yea, the senators and nobles that sit in the most august assembly. And O how happy are they, of whatever order, whom the hand of God draws out of the crowd, and turns their minds from these various lying and transitory vanities, to the pursuit of true and lasting good! Happy they whom he, by a wonderful interposition of grace in their favour, sets apart as dear to himself. Which leads to the 3d verse.

Ver. 3. *But know, that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself; the Lord will hear when I call unto him.*

THE prophet hath this great support both of his faith and of his kingdom, the immutable and unshaken decree of the supreme and universal King; and it is the firm establishment of David's infinitely greater Son in his throne and kingdom; *I will declare the decree;* Psal. ii. 7. In this verse, and there also, we may most properly understand it of both, more immediately of David as the type, but chiefly and in its consummate sense as referring to Christ the Lord, and having its full end and accomplishment in his endless and eternal kingdom. He is, by way of eminence, *God's Holy One, holy, and harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.* And those, whoever they are, who endeavour to oppose themselves to the divine purposes, betray the most desperate madness, and on whatever strength or counsel they depend on the enterprise, like waves dashed against the solid rock, they shall be broken in pieces, by what they vainly attempt to break. And on this basis does the whole safety of the whole church rest, and that of all God's saints, of all

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those *whom he sets apart for himself*, and as the form of the original here has been thought to imply, wonderfully separates as his peculiar people and treasure, the sacred charge of Christ the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, which all the powers of earth and the gates of hell shall in vain attempt to wrest from him. And this is the confidence on which believers should repose themselves. They never trust to themselves or their own strength or virtues; but they often redouble that cry, *Thou Lord, art my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer. Blessed, O Lord, is the man who trusteth in thee;* who must previously and necessarily despair first of himself, as considered in himself alone, as the great apostle says, *When I am weak, then am I strong;* according to that lively and just expression, "Faith, which is endangered in security, is secure in danger."

The psalmist adds, *The Lord will hear me when I call.* From the divine decree and favour, he promises not to himself an entire freedom from all and every attempt of his enemies, but assures himself that God will be present in the midst of his calamities, present and propitious; not to the indolent and drowsy soul, but to that which solicits his assistance by prayer. And this is the determination of every godly man, whom the Lord *has set apart for himself*, that he will call upon God without ceasing, and that if any unusual difficulty arise, he will call upon him more fervently. Hence it appears how entirely all our safety depends upon prayer. Yet all our prayers, and those of the whole church, are sustained by the prayers of our great King and Priest: as Augustine says in reference to that known story in the Evangelists, *Because the waves rise the ship may be tossed, but because Christ prays it cannot be sunk.*

Ver. 4. *Stand in awe and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.*

O MOST friendly counsel which is here offered to enemies! This is indeed overcoming hatred and injury with the very best of favours; by far the most noble kind of victory. A sublime and heavenly mind, like the upper region of the world, is not only itself always calm and serene, as being inaccessible to every breath of injury and

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turbulent impression, but it also continually sheds down its benign influences without distinction on all below it, *on the evil and the good, the just and the unjust.*

Stand in awe; the Hebrew and Greek have it, *Be ye moved;* and as this emotion may arise either from anger, fear, or any other affection of the mind, the Septuagint renders it, *Be angry and sin not*, a maxim which St. Paul, finding to his purpose, inserts in his epistle to the Ephesians. Nevertheless, the author of this psalm here seems apparently to demand their fear rather than their anger; and accordingly the targum explains it, *Fear him*, that is, *God, and sin not:* Kimchi, *fear the Lord who has chosen me king*, and Abenezra, *fear God and despise not my glory, for that great King will require the derision at the hand of the deriders.*

The passions are the inmost wheels of this machine which we call man, whose motions all the rest of the life follows, and all the errors of this career of ours proceed from their irregularity;—of so great importance is it, that every one should rightly determine what he should desire, and hope, and fear. And from the time that man lost the ingenuousness of his disposition, and became like a wild ass-colt, the use of fear has become very great. It is true that they who are born again, and who really are the sons of God, are especially led by the sweet and noble energy of the divine principle of love, and therefore it is the saying of the beloved apostle, that *perfect love*, or charity, *casteth out fear.* But as the generality of mankind are either entirely destitute of this divine love, or possess it only in a very low and imperfect degree, so it is certain, that with regard to him whose heart is most entirely fired with this celestial flame, we may understand the words as signifying, that in such a one this great and fervent love does indeed cast out all despairings and diffident fears, but not that of a pious and reverential awe. Alas! most of us, under the pretence of avoiding a servile terror, perversely shake off the bonds of holy and ingenuous fear, and become obstinate and self-willed; whereas when we look into the word of God, we shall find the holiest men there tremble in the divine presence, and sometimes acknowledge even great horror of mind. *My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments,*

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Psal. cxix. 120. *Destruction from God was a terror to me, and because of his excellency I could not endure,* Job xxxi. 23. In this sense, as David declares *the fear of the Lord is clean, and endureth for ever,* endures in the most happy agreement with perfect love. Nor is it to remain only in spirits that inhabit flesh, but in all the angelic choirs, pure and happy as they are. Nay, the profound reverence of that eternal and tremendous Majesty flourishes and reigns most of all there; for in proportion to the degree in which the knowledge is clearer and vision more distinct, are the veneration and the fear more deep and humble. How reasonable then must it be, that mortal men, beset with sore temptations and dangers, should, as Hezekiah expresseth it, *walk softly* and tremble before that infinite Majesty, at *whose voice the earth is shaken,* and at whose *rebuke the pillars of heaven are moved.* With great propriety did one of the ancients say, "Fear is the first swaddling bond of new born wisdom," or, as the scripture expresses it, *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.* It is observed that the original word, there made use of, signifies both the beginning and top; and in both senses it is most true. The author just mentioned admirably says, "Do they call such a one unlearned? It is the only wisdom I know, to fear God; it is the beginning of wisdom, and the end of all discourse, as Solomon describes it: it is indeed the τὸ πᾶν, the whole matter, the whole concern of man, and it is all in all—*Fear God.*" And elsewhere he adds, "This fear is most salutary to men, but at the same time most rare, superlatively so." And once more, "It is," says he, "the greatest of all good things, to fear God; and the ungodly, in falling from it, shall not be permitted long to continue in the abuse of his own folly." Well therefore is it here added, *Sin not.* This fear is the water of the sanctuary to quench all the flames of concupiscence. "This," says Bernard, "is the arrow that strikes through all the desires of the flesh." Hence arose Abraham's fear and apprehension among strangers: *Surely,* says he, *the fear of God is not in this place.*

But in order to produce this fear, it is necessary that we should have right conceptions of God; that nothing impure can please him, because he is holiness itself; that

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nothing secret can be concealed from him, because he is light; nor can any sinner surely be mad enough to hope he shall escape the long hand of this righteous Judge and supreme King, whose power is immense, and who cannot be a *respecter of persons*. What evil then can escape with impunity? *Thou, O Lord, thou only art to be feared; and who may stand even in thy sight, when once thou art angry?*

Commune with your own heart, or, as some render it, *examine yourselves*. O how few do this! Men live abroad, and are indeed strangers at home: the great mark of human madness—to delight in speaking and hearing of what concerns others, while no individual will attempt to descend into himself. Yet this faculty, which we call reflection, is the peculiar privilege of human nature; and to be borne on wholly by external objects, is indeed brutal. And O what heaps of disorder, what odious filthiness must there necessarily be in a breast, which is never looked into and cleansed out! Dear youths, if amidst all your other studies, you do not learn to converse and commune with your own selves, whatever you know, or rather, whatever you imagine you know, I would not purchase it at the expense of a straw.

On your bed, or, as some would render it, *in your secret chamber*, when free from the noise of the world, and the hurry of daily business. An ancient said, "The reflections of the night are deepest." And it has been observed, that David, in the nineteenth psalm, ascribes speech to the day, and wisdom to the silent night. It is an excellent advice of Pythagoras, and the verses that contain it do indeed deserve to be called *golden*, that "we should not allow ourselves to go to sleep, till we have seriously revolved the actions of the day, and asked ourselves, What have I done amiss? What good have I done, or neglected to do? —that so we may reprove ourselves for what has been wrong, and take the comfort of what has been as it ought.

And be still. This refers not so much to the tongue, as to the mind; for what does an external silence signify, if the inward affections be turbulent? A sedate and composed mind is necessary in order to know ourselves and to know God; as it is hinted in Psalm xlvi. 10; *Be still, and know that I am God.* Such wisdom both deserves

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and demands a vacant soul. It will not, as it were, thrust itself into a corner, nor inhabit a polluted or unquiet breast. God was *not in the whirlwind, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice.* The Holy Spirit is peaceful and pacific, but wicked men are turbulent and stormy, driven like the sea, whose waves are tossed about, and throw up continually mire and dirt. Impurity is the inseparable attendant of this inquietude; *but the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable,* pacific; and in that blessed country to which it teaches us to aspire, there is the most perfect and everlasting cohabitation of purity and peace.

Ver. 5. *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.*

THE mind of man is earthly. As mortals now are, entangled in the folds of flesh and sense, it knows not how to rise to things celestial and divine; and when it is stimulated with some sense of the eternal Deity and the worship due to him, it generally slides into some lighter offices and external rites, how carelessly soever performed, and there it rests. But *God is a spirit,* and requires to be *worshiped in spirit and in truth.* And the solemn visible sacrifices, when instituted by the command of him the great Invisible, are to be presented by every pious person with all humble and obedient regard; yet, the chief labour is to be employed in the pure sublime worship and obedience of the mind. The heathen philosophers objected to the primitive Christians, that they did not sacrifice; to which some of the early apologists reply thus: "The Former and Parent of the whole universe has no need of incense and of blood. The greatest sacrifice we can present to him, is to know who has *stretched out the heavens*—who has *laid the foundations of the earth*—who has *gathered together the waters into the hollow of the sea,* and divided the light from the darkness—who has formed the whole animal world and the human species, and who governs them all by his nod; and, acknowledging him such an immense and omnipotent Being, to *lift up pure and holy hands to him.*" And the truth of this sentiment has generally prevailed throughout all ages, even in the Jewish Church, while the obligation to sacrifice did yet continue, with all the laborious institution of

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external worship, holiness, and righteousness; and integrity of heart and life were acknowledged to be the most essential parts of religion, though, alas! while all confessed it in words, there were very few that set themselves seriously to perform it. Hence arose the necessity of inculcating this lesson so frequently, Psalm l; Isa. i. xxix. And what is there taught at large is here hinted in this short clause. Since the temple has been demolished, and the priests with their sacrifices have ceased, the Jews themselves have instituted, in the place of this, the offering of the lip, with the commemoration only of ancient sacrifice, persuaded that this would be equally effectual, and have appointed three daily lessons, calling him who diligently recites them a son of eternal life.

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness. It is no improbable conjecture of some commentators, that David here refers to the confidence and boast of some of Saul's courtiers in those sacrifices and that solemn worship, from which their envy had perhaps banished him. It is certainly much easier to sacrifice a ram or a bullock, than to slay anger or ambition; easier indeed to heap up whole hecatombs of animals, than to resign one brutal affection or concupiscence; yea, easier to present all our goods, than ourselves as living sacrifices, though that is undoubtedly our reasonable service. The Mosaic sacrifices, though instituted by God, borrowed all their value from that evening victim which was to be slain in the end of the world, who was himself the sacrifice and the altar, and the one only *High Priest after the order of Melchizedec;* who yet instituted a perpetual succession of those who should be *a royal priesthood,* the whole series of which priests, in their succeeding generations, are daily offering to God, the Father of spirits, the pure and spiritual sacrifice of righteousness, most acceptable to him, as passing through the hand of that great High Priest, who incessantly ministers in that high and holy sanctuary. As Bernard excellently speaks, "Nothing, Lord, that is thine can suffice me without thyself, nor can any thing that is mine without myself be pleasing to thee." And Augustine, "Let thy fire entirely consume me, so that nothing of me may remain to myself." And this one holocaust comprehends all the sacrifices of righteousness; the un-

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derstanding, the love, all the affections and faculties of the soul, and organs of our bodies; all our words, actions, and thoughts, prayers and vows, hymns and thanksgivings, piety, modesty, charity, and the whole choir of virtues, exercised in a diligent and harmonious observance of all his precepts. These are victims and perfumes of incense worthy so pure a Deity, *who eats not the flesh of bulls, nor drinks the blood of goats; who, if he were hungry would not tell us, for all the beasts of the forest are his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. Offer unto God thanksgivings, and pay thy vows unto the Most High. For he that offereth praise glorifies him, and to him that orders his conversation aright, will he show the salvation of God.*

Even the heathen philosophers and poets saw and taught, that these sacrifices of a pious mind were most fit for a rational worshipper, and must be most fit for God, to whom they are addressed. "Strange indeed would it be," says Socrates, "if the gods should look to the gift and sacrifice, and not the soul." And passages of Horace and Persius to this purpose are so well known, that they need not be repeated. The language of the son of Sirach is also agreeable to it. *He that keepeth the law, bringeth offerings enough: he that taketh heed to the commandment, offereth a peace offering. He that requiteth a good turn, offereth fine flour, and he that giveth alms, sacrificeth praise. To depart from wickedness is a thing pleasing to the Lord, and to forsake unrighteousness is a propitiation.*

And put your trust in the Lord. This very trust, with which the mind reposes itself upon God, is both the great consolation of a good man, and the great sacrifice of piety and righteousness. The faith of Abraham was a sacrifice much dearer to God, not only than the ram which he actually offered, but even than his dearest son whom he had brought to the altar. *He was strong in faith,* says the apostle, *and so he gave glory to God.* And again, only they who offer the sacrifice of righteousness can rely upon him with a true and solid confidence. Not that these sacrifices, though the choicest and best of all, can pretend to any merit, but because they are the most genuine signs and most certain seals of a soul in

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covenant with God. So that there is indeed a mutual signing; God offering the dearest pledges of his favour to us, and we in like manner, as is most fit, rendering all that we have and all that we are to him, with the most humble and grateful heart. And certainly this union and perpetual undivided friendship, is the true εὐθυμία of the holy soul; that temperature which alone can give it solid tranquillity and felicity, as it follows presently after in this psalm.

Ver. 6. *There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*

THE psalmist now returns to himself and his own affairs, and having sufficiently admonished his enemies concerning the true and only good, enforces his exhortation by his example, that if they thought fit, they might follow it, for this is the most efficacious manner of teaching; but if they would not, that he might at least enjoy the benefit of his own counsel, and wrapping himself up in his own happiness, might from that eminence, look down upon all the vain and wretched pursuits of the mad vulgar. Like drunken men, they reel and stagger from place to place; they often fall down upon their face, and strike and dash themselves against what they desired to embrace. Through all their life with an unstable pace, they catch at flying forms of good; and after all their falls and their bruises, they cry out again and again, *Who will show us any good?* And when they behold any new species or shadow of it, they immediately run to it. Nay, perhaps, so light and various are they in their pursuit, they return again to that in which they had been frequently deceived, and which they had so often abandoned. Rabbi Solomon paraphrases the words thus: "When Israel saw the nations prosperous, he said, Who will show us a like prosperity? But David says, Envy them not; we have a sublimer prosperity in the light of thy Divine countenance." "That is good," says the great philosopher of the schools, "which all pursue." The various affections and desires of the mind, are as the pulse and natural respiration; but certain internal principles, which, not inwrought by nature, are afterwards received and deeply

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engraved upon the heart, are the springs of that motion; our different opinions of different things do nevertheless all meet in this, that "we would see good." But they who select from the various objects that present themselves a suitable, complete, and substantial good, and who, neglecting every thing else, bend all their pursuits to that, are the only wise and happy men.

This the psalmist professes he did, and freely invites all that pleased, to join and take a part with him in these desires and pursuits, well knowing that the happiness was abundantly sufficient for many, for all that would apply themselves to it, and such as could not at all be diminished by being imparted; for it was indeed the *αὐτάρκες καλὸν*, the self-sufficient and all-sufficient Good, which was one of the titles that some of the wiser heathens gave their Jupiter. But he of whom we speak is *the living and the true God;* nor is there any other good whatsoever adequate to the human mind. And what we say of his infinite sufficiency is most aptly signified by this adumbration which the psalmist uses,—I say by the adumbration of light, nor do I think fit to correct it as an incongruous expression, for light is indeed as it were the shadow of *God*, and that fulness of supreme good, which is in him, is in some degree shadowed out by light, which entirely illustrates, with the full stream of its rays, all who behold it, and is not broken into little fragments, to be sparingly distributed to each. Many seek many things; they pursue any good with uncertain and ignorant desires; but we have fixed upon the one petition we should insist upon, for in this one is all, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.* O rich, grand, and incomparable desire! Without this, all the proudest palaces of monarchs are gloomy caverns, dark as hell, and all the riches of all the earth, mere indigence. This is the proper light of the intellectual world, and it *puts gladness into the heart*, as it follows.

Ver. 7. *Thou hast put gladness into my heart more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*

Gladness into my heart; to which the gross delights of earthly things cannot reach: they stick as it were before the threshold. *Corn and wine* are only the refreshment

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of these mean, frail, earthly bodies, and the support of this corporeal and terrene life, but have nothing congenial with and akin to the heaven-born spirit. It is said indeed that *bread strengthens man's heart*, and *wine makes it glad;* but the heart there spoken of is that which is the spring of animal life and natural spirit; whereas, to that heart which holds the preference in human nature, which may therefore be called the governing part, there is nothing which gives light and gladness, beneath the eternal Father of lights and of spirits. He cherishes the languishing soul with the rays of his love, and satisfies it with the consolations of his Spirit, as with a kind of heavenly nectar, or nepenthe, that, while it confides in his safety, lays all its cares and fears asleep, and lulls it into deep peace, and calm sweet repose; without which if the mind be a little agitated, no gentle breeze of harmony, no melody of birds or harp, can bring on the pleasing slumber, during which nevertheless the heart awakes. O happy man, who betakes his whole soul to God, and does not only choose him above all, but in the place of all, waiting only on him! Happy man, who having been chosen by him with preventing love and unmerited benignity, embraces his ample all-sufficient Creator for his inheritance and his wealth, often repeating with sacred transport, "My God and my all!" This is the man that has enough; and therefore to allude to the words of the poet, He is not disquieted by the raging of the sea, nor any severity of the seasons, whatever stars may rise and set.

God fixes his gracious dwelling in the pure and holy soul which has learned to despise the vanity of riches, and makes it calm in the midst of hurries, and secure in the deepest solicitudes. And not merely to find, but even to seek after God, is better to such a soul, inexpressibly better than to possess the richest treasure, the most extensive empire, or to have all the variety of sensual pleasures waiting upon its beck.

I remember to have read of some military officers, who crossing the Nile in the same boat with the two Macarii of Egypt, said to them, in allusion to their name, "You are indeed happy, who laugh at the world." "Yes," said they, "it is evident that we are happy, not merely in

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name but in reality, but you are unhappy whom the world derides as poor creatures whom it sees entangled in its snares."

St. Augustine also quotes from Politian, a similar example of a pretorian soldier, who walking out with his comrade, found in a cottage, into which he accidentally came, a book containing the life of the hermit Anthony, and when he had read a little in it, looking upon his friend, said, "At what are we taking so much pains to arrive? What do we seek? For what do we go through the fatigues of a military life? The highest of our hopes at court must be, to share some extraordinary degree of the emperor's favour. And how frail and dangerous a situation is that! And through how many other previous dangers must we pass to it! And how soon will all the advantages we can hope from it be over! But I may this moment, if I please, become the friend and favourite of God." And he had no sooner uttered these words, than they both resolved upon quitting the world, that they might give up all the remainder of their days to religion.

Holy men in former ages did wonders in conquering the world and themselves; but we, unhappy, degenerate, and drowsy creatures as we are, blush to hear that they did what we cannot or will not do. We are indeed inclined to disbelieve the facts, and rather choose to deny their virtues, than to confess our own indolence and cowardice.

PSALM XXXII.

Ver. 1. *Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

O THE pure, the overflowing, the incomparable sweet fountain of scripture!

"Hence light we draw, and fill the sacred cup."

Whereas the springs of philosophy in human affairs are not very clear, and in divine they are quite turbid and muddy; which one of the greatest orators and philosophers among them all freely confesses. "I think," says

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Seneca, "we are not only blind to true wisdom, but are very dull and slow of apprehension even in those things which seem to be discerned and understood." Nor is this to be wondered at; for there would be little difference between things human and divine, if the dim eye of our reason were sufficient to discover their secrets. One of the ancients excellently says, "If you examine things ever so accurately, you will never be able to discover them, if God keeps them vailed."

It would be a vain and ridiculous labour to light up a great number of lanthorns and torches, and go out and look for the sun in the night; but when the appointed hour of morning comes, he arises, as of his own accord, and freely manifests himself, by his own lustre, to every beholder. The wisest of the heathens undertook to find out the supreme Being and the supreme Good; but wandering through the devious ways of multiplied errors, they could attain to neither. Nor was it the least of their errors, that they sought them as two different things, when it is most certain that both are united in one; for it is the only and ultimate happiness of man, to be united to that first and supreme Being and Good, from which he drew his original. But since there has so sad a distance and disagreement arisen between God and man, by our deplorable apostasy from him, there could not be the least hope of attaining that union, did not infinite goodness and mercy propose the full and free pardon of our offences: so that the true determination of this grand question about happiness, is evidently this, *Blessed is that man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered.* Innocence was the first means of attaining happiness, which being once violated, the only plank that can save us after our shipwreck is remission and repentance; which two things, the whole scripture assures us, that the divine wisdom has so connected, as with an adamantine band. And this psalm now before us is a signal declaration of it, which, since it inculcates so grand a topic of religion, may well be styled as it is, *Maschil, a lesson of instruction.* For, as St. Augustine well observes, "that is instruction indeed, which teaches us that man is not saved by the merits of his works, but by the grace of God."

Blessed; or, O blessed man, or, O the felicities of that

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man!—to denote the most supreme and perfect blessedness. He only has attained to complete felicity, whose numerous debts are all remitted, though, far from being able to pay them, he could not so much as reckon them up. And blessed is he that knows it, as the proverb is, "No man is happy but he who thinks himself so."

The man whose iniquity is forgiven. As the word is *Nesevi*, it might be rendered, *Blessed is the man who is eased of the burden of his sin.* A burden indeed too heavy for the strongest man upon earth; a burden so dreadfully great, that God's angels are not able to stand under it; for many of the chief of them were pressed down to hell by it, and can rise no more. But though no giant on earth or in heaven could bear it, *a Lamb* subjected himself to it; but it was *a lamb without blemish and without spot*, burdened with no load of his own sin, nor stained with the least spot of pollution. *The Lamb of God, the Son of God*, who is himself God, is he who takes away all the sins of the world, as one sin: taking the burden upon himself, he bears it and carries it away.

Covered. That sinners may more clearly apprehend, and more easily and firmly believe, a thing which seems so difficult to admit, as the free and full remission of sin, it is painted out by various beautiful expressions and figures in the sacred scriptures; *washing, cleansing, blotting out, scattering like a cloud, entirely forgetting, casting into the bottom of the sea*, and here, by that of *taking away and covering*, and by that phrase which explains both, of *not imputing* them. And this expression of *covering* them, is with great propriety added to the former phrase of lightening the sinner of the burden of them, that there may be no fear of their returning again, or coming into sight, since God has not only taken the heavy load from our shoulders, but for ever hidden it from his own eyes, and the vail of mercy has taken it away; that great covering of divine love, which is large enough to overspread so many and so great offences. Thus it does, as it were, turn away the penetrating eye of his justice, which the most secret inquiry could not elude, did not he himself in pity voluntarily avert it.

But you will know what is our propitiatory, what the covering of the mercy seat; even Jesus, who was typified

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by that *Caporeth* in the Temple, which the septuagint render ἱλαστήριον ἐπίθημα, a *propitiatory covering:* by which title our great Redeemer is marked out, Rom. iii. 25; as the same Hebrew word, *Caphar*, signifies both to cover and to expiate. But that the thing may be more evident and certain, the thought is repeated again in the second verse.

Ver. 2. *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

ABEN-EZRA paraphrases it, *Of whose sins God does not think,* does not regard them, so as to bring them into judgment, reckoning them as if they were not οὐ μὴ λογίζεται, does not count or calculate them, or charge them to account; does not require for them the debt of punishment. To us the remission is entirely free, our Sponsor having taken upon him the whole business of paying the ransom. His suffering is our impunity, his bond our freedom, and his chastisement our peace; and therefore the prophet says, *The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.* Distracted creatures that we are, to indulge in those sins which brought death upon our dear Redeemer, and to be so cold in our affections to that Redeemer who died for those sins!

This weighty sentence, of itself so admirable, Paul renders yet more illustrious, by inserting it into his reasonings on the topic of justification, Rom. iv. 6, as a celebrated testimony of that great article of our faith. *David,* says he, *thus describeth the blessedness of that man, saying Blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven.* So that this is David's opinion concerning true happiness: he says not, Blessed are those who rule over kingdoms, blessed are those generals who are renowned for their martial bravery and success, though he himself had both these titles to boast of. It is not the encomiums of the greatest multitudes, nor the breath of popular applause, nor any other degree of human honour, which entitles a man to this character. It is not said, Blessed is he who ploughs many thousand acres of land, or who has heaped together mountains of gold and silver; nor, Blessed is he who has married a beautiful and rich woman; nor Blessed he who understands the secrets of nature or even

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the mysteries of religion; but *O happy man whose sins are pardoned, and to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile,* whose breast is full, not of feigned repentance, but of a fervent love of holiness and hatred of sin. This makes life happy, nay, absolutely blessed. But alas! when we inculcate these things we sing to the deaf. The ignorance and folly of mankind will not cease to pronounce the proud and the covetous happy, and those who triumph in successful wickedness, and who, in chase of these lying shadows of happiness, destroy their days, and their years, and their souls.

"Alas," says the wise Roman, "how little do some who thirst most impatiently after glory, know what it is, or where it is to be sought!" Which is equally applicable to that true calm and serenity of mind which indeed all pursue, but yet few are able to attain. But as for us who enjoy the celestial instruction of this sacred volume, if we are ignorant of it, our ignorance is quite inexcusable, obstinate, and affected, since we are wilfully blind in the clearest and most refulgent light. This points out that good which can completely fill all the most extended capacities of the human soul, and which we generally seek for in vain on all sides, catching at it where it is not to be found, but ever neglecting it where alone it is. But is it then possible at once to be solidly and completely happy? You have not merely the ideas of it, but the thing itself, not only clearly pointed out, but most freely offered, with divine munificence; so that if you do not obstinately reject the offer, it must be your own. And this happiness consists in returning to the favour and friendship of God, who most mercifully grants us the free pardon of all our sins, if we do, with unfeigned repentance and a heart free of all guile, not only humbly confess and lament them, but entirely forsake, and with implacable hatred for ever renounce them. All the names, all the variety of felicities, bliss, and happiness are accumulated on that man who has known this *change,* as the vulgate renders it, *of the right hand of the Most High,* on whom this bright day of expiation and pardon has beamed. He easily looks down from on high on all the empty titles and false images of earthly happiness, and when he is

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bereaved of them all, yea, and beset on every side with what the world calls misfortunes and afflictions, ceases not to be happy. In sorrow he is joyful, in poverty rich, and in chains free. When he seems buried deep, so that not one ray of the sun can reach him, he is surrounded with radiant lustre; when overwhelmed with ignominy, he glories; and in death itself, he lives, he conquers, he triumphs. What can be heavy to that man who is eased of the intolerable burden of sin? How animated was that saying of Luther, "Smite, Lord, smite, for thou hast absolved me from my sins." Whose anger should he fear who knows that God is propitious to him,—that supreme King, whose wrath is indeed the messenger of death, but the light of whose countenance is life; who gladdens all by the rays of his favour, and by one smile disperses the darkest cloud, and calms the most turbulent tempest?

But we must now observe the complication of a twofold good, in constituting this felicity; for we have two things here connected, as conspiring to make the person spoken of blessed! the free remission of sin, and the inward purification of the heart, *in whose spirit there is no guile.* This simplicity is a most excellent part of purity, opposed to all wickedness and arts of deceit; and in common speech, that which is simple and has no foreign mixture is called pure. Pardon presents us as just and innocent before our Judge; and that sanctity is not to be regarded as constituting any part of our justifying righteousness before God, nor as only the condition or sign of our felicity, but is truly and properly a part of it. Purity is the accomplishment of our felicity, begun on earth, and to be consummated in heaven; that purity, I say, which is begun here, and shall there be consummated. But if any one think he can divide these two things, which the hand of God has joined by so inseparable a bond, it is a vain dream. Nay, by attempting to separate these two parts of happiness, he will in fact only exclude himself from the whole. Jesus, our victorious Saviour, has snatched us from the jaws of eternal death; but to be delivered from the cruel tyranny and bonds of sin, and to be brought into the blessed liberty of the sons of God, was another essential part of our redemption, and

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if any one does not embrace this with equal alacrity and delight as the other benefit, he is a wretched slave of the most mean and ignoble spirit, and being equally unworthy of both parts of this stupendous deliverance, he will justly forfeit and lose both. And this is the epidemical antinomianism of the Christian world, because they who labour under it have nothing but the name of Christians: they gladly hear of the pardon of their sins, and the salvation of their souls, while they are averse to the doctrine of holiness and repentance. It is a disagreeable message, a *hard saying, and who can bear it?* But O the incomparable charms of holiness! It is to be desired, not only for the sake of other benefits which come in its train, but especially for itself: so that he who is not transported with a most ardent love of it, is blind, and deserves to be thrust into the mill, to tread that uncomfortable round, and to grind there; deserves to be a slave for ever, since he knows not how to use liberty when offered to him. Shall the stoic say, "The servant of philosophy is truly free," and shall we scruple to assert the same concerning pure religion, and evangelical holiness? Nor this freedom from guile, this fair simplicity, of which the psalmist speaks, is deservedly reckoned among the chief endowments of a pure soul, and is here named instead of all the rest, as nothing is more like to that God who inspects the very heart, in nothing do we so much resemble him; and therefore it is most agreeable to him, because most like unto him. He is the most simple of all beings, and is indeed truth itself, and therefore he *desires truth in the inward parts*, and hates *a heart and a heart*, as the Hebrew phrase is to express those that are double hearted. And how much our blessed Redeemer esteems this simplicity, we may learn from the earnestness with which he inculcates it upon his disciples, that they should be *simple as doves*. We may learn it also from the honourable testimony he bears to this character in Nathanael, when he pronounces him *an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile*. And especially from his own perfect example, as it is said of him, *he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth*. Perhaps the Psalmist might the more willingly mention this virtue, as he reflected with penitential distress on his

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crafty and cruel attempt of covering that adultery which he had committed, with the vail of murder. But however that was, it is certain that this guileless sincerity of heart holds the first rank in the graces that attend true repentance. It may be sometimes our duty to open our sins to men, by an ingenuous confession; but it is always our duty to do it to God, who promises to cover them only on this condition, that we do sincerely uncover them ourselves. But if we affect that which is his part, he will, to our unspeakable damage, do that which he had assigned to us. If we hide them, he will bring them into open light, and will discuss and examine each with the greater severity. "He," says Ambrose, "who burdens himself, makes his error so much the higher." "In proportion to the degree," says Tertullian, "in which you are unwilling to spare yourself, God will spare you." But what madness is it to attempt to conceal any action from him, from whom, as Thales wisely declares, "you cannot so much as conceal a thought!" But not now to insist upon the impossibility of a concealment, a wise man would not wish to cover his wounds and his disease from that physician from whose skilful hand he might otherwise receive healing; and this is what the psalmist presently after, for our instruction, confesses.

Ver. 3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.*

WHILE he suppressed the ingenuous voice of confession, the continually increasing weight of his calamity extorted from him a voice of roaring: "While I would not speak as it became a guilty man, I was compelled even to bellow like a beast." Nevertheless, this wild roaring did not move the divine compassion, nor atone his displeasure.

Ver. 4. *For day and night thine hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.*

HITHERTO that voice was wanting, to which the bowels of the Father always echo back the voice of a son full of reverence, and ready to confess his errors; without which, cries and lamentations in misery are no more regarded in the sight of God, than the howling of dogs, according to that expression of Hosea, *They have not cried to me with*

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their heart, when they howled upon their beds. A dog howls when he is hungry, or when he is lashed; but from a son when he is chastened, acknowledgment of his fault, and deprecations of his father's displeasure are expected; and when the son thus acknowledges his offence, and entreats for pardon, it is the part of a compassionate father to forgive, and to spare. Nor do we indeed confess our offences to our Father, as if he were not perfectly acquainted with them, but we fly to him, who requires we should repent, that he may not show us, by punishment, those things which we shun showing to him by confession. "I confessed unto the Lord," says Augustine, "to whom all the abyss of my sin and misery lay open; so that if I did not confess whatever was hidden in my heart, I should not hide myself from him, but him from me."

Thy hand was heavy upon me, that hand which, when pressing, is so heavy; when raising, is so sweet and powerful; and when scattering its blessings, so full and so ample. He would not at first be humbled by the confession of his iniquity, and therefore he is humbled by the weight of the hand of God. O powerful hand! beyond all comparison more grievous than any other hand to press down, and more powerful to raise up! He who suppresses his sins, without confessing them,

"Conceals an inward wound, and burns with secret fire."

Under the appearance of sparing he is indeed cruel to himself. When he has drunk down iniquity, and keeps it within, and it is not covered by the divine forgiveness, it is like a poison which consumes the marrow in the midst of his bones, and dries up the vital moisture. It may perhaps occasion more present pain, to draw out the point of the weapon which sticks in the flesh; but to neglect it will occasion greater danger, and more future torment. Nor will the dart fall out by his running hither and thither, but, on the contrary, as the poet expresses it with respect to the wounded deer, it fixes deeper and deeper.

But the only healing herb that the sinner can find, is true repentance and humble confession; not that which acknowledges sin in a few slight words, when it has hardly looked upon it and known it, but that which pro-

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ceeds from a previous true and vivid compunction of soul, and is inseparably attended by renovation and purity of heart and life; and so as comprehending this, it is sometimes put for the whole of repentance; *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* And so, in the psalm before us. .

Ver. 5. *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

TRUE and genuine repentance hath eyes, as it were, on both sides: it looks back on sins already committed, to lament them; it looks forward, and humbly resolves no more to commit what it has lamented. And each of these is expressed by each of the words by which repentance is signified, μεταμελεία μετανοία, which words are therefore used promiscuously, both by the sacred writers and by others, so that the received difference between them seems to me to have little foundation. For Phavorinus interprets the word μετανοία an anguish of soul under a consciousness of having acted a foolish and absurd part; and the Latin has the same signification, if we will admit the judgment of Gellius, who seems to have been a very accurate critic in affairs of that nature. He observes, "We are said to repent of things, whether our own actions, or those of others which have been performed by our advice or instigation, which do afterwards displease us, so that we change our judgment concerning them." But we will wave all further concern about words; the thing itself demands our greatest attention. I entirely agree with Thomas à Kempis, who said, "I had rather feel the inward working of repentance, than know the most accurate description and definition of it." Yet how averse sinners are to this free, though useful and salutary, confession of sin, abundantly appears from this example of so great a man as the psalmist, when taken in this unhappy snare; for he confesses that he lay long senseless and stupid in that quagmire into which he was fallen, and that it was with difficulty that he was as it were racked into a confession by such exquisite tortures

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both of body and mind. On the other hand, the gracious readiness of the Father of Mercies to grant pardon is so much the more evident, as on the first word of confession that he uttered, or rather the first purpose that he formed in his mind, immediately the pardon, the full and free pardon, came down signed as in the court of Heaven. *I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest.* O admirable clemency! It requires nothing but that the offender should plead guilty, and this not that it may more freely punish, but more liberally forgive. He requires that we should condemn ourselves, that so he may absolve us.

Ver. 6. *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayst be found; surely in the floods of great waters, they shall not come nigh unto him.*

THIS is the joyful message, this is the greatest doctrine of the gospel, which opens the first door of hope to sinners; that God is capable of being appeased, yea, that he is actually appeased; that he freely offers peace and favour to those who have deserted him, when they return to his obedience; that he runs forth to meet them, and to receive them with a most affectionate embrace; and having so importunately entreated our return, will not despise those who are treading back with prayers and tears the fatal path, which their folly had chosen. This is what we so frequently read in Scripture, that *the Lord is gracious and very merciful, slow to anger and ready to pardon.* If he were not such, who would dare approach him? But seeing he is such a God, who should refuse or delay his return? Surely every rational and pious mind will, without delay, invoke so gentle and mild a Lord; *will pray to him while he is* exorable, or, as the Hebrew expresses it, *in a time of finding;* for he who promises pardon does not promise to-morrow. There are certain times in which he may be spoken with, and a certain appointed day of pardon and of grace, which if a man by stupid perverseness despise, or by sloth neglect, surely he is justly overwhelmed with eternal night and misery, and must necessarily perish by the deluge of divine wrath; since he has contemned and derided that ark of salvation which was prepared, and in which whoever enters into it shall be

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safe, while the world is perishing. Though all be one unbounded sea, a sea without shore, yet, as it is here said, the greatest inundation, *the floods of deep waters shall not come nigh unto him.* This the psalmist exhorts those that have experienced it to teach, and determines himself so to retain it with deep attention and firm faith in his own mind, as in the following verse.

Ver. 7. *Thou art my hiding place;* thou hast been, and wilt ever be so. *Thou hast compassed,* and thou wilt *compass me, with songs of deliverance;* even me who was so surrounded with clamours of sin. Where he further intimates, that songs of praise are perpetually to be offered to God our deliverer. And that these faithful admonitions and counsels may meet with greater attention and regard, he offers himself to us as a most benevolent teacher and leader.

Ver. 8, 9, 10, 11. *I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go,* &c. See to it only, that thou be tractable, and dost not with a brutal obstinacy and fierceness repel this friendly and wise counsel, as capable of being governed only by violence, like a mule or unbroken horse, which must be held in by bit and bridle. Such indeed are the greatest part of men, whom the philosophers with great severity, but with too much justice, called "wild bulls with human faces."

But it is added, as the sum of all admonition, and the great axiom most worthy of regard, that *many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.* And the psalm concludes with this as the burden of it, *Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.*

Truly, my friends, I have nothing further to wish for myself or you, than that we may heartily believe these things; for then it would be impossible that we should not with open arms embrace true religion, and clasp it to our hearts, since nature teaches every one to desire happiness, and to flee from misery. So that Epicurus himself would teach us to lay hold on joy and pleasure, as the first and proper good. This therefore let us lay down as a certain principle, and ever adhere to it, that we may not, like brute beasts, remain in subjection to the flesh;

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that safety, and joy, and all happiness are the property of him who is possessed of virtue, and that all virtue is comprehended in true piety. And let us remember what the prophet adds, according to the Greek translators, as the necessary consequence of this principle, that *to the wicked there can be no joy.*

PSALM CXXX.

Ver. 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.*

It is undoubtedly both a useful and a pleasant employment, to observe the emotions of great and heroic minds in great and arduous affairs; but that mind only is truly great and superior to the whole world, which does in the most placid manner subject itself to God, securely casting all its burdens and cares upon him in all the uncertain alterations of human affairs, looking at his hand, and fixing its regard upon that alone. Such the royal prophet David declares himself every where to have been, and no where more evidently than in this psalm, which seems to have been composed by him. He lifts up his head amidst surrounding waves, and directing his face and his voice to heaven, he says, *Out of the depths, O Lord, do I cry unto thee:* for so I would render it, as he does not seem to express a past fact, but as the Hebrew idiom imports, a prayer which he was now actually presenting.

Out of the depths; being as it were immersed and overwhelmed in an abyss of misery and calamities. It is indeed the native lot of man, to be *born to trouble,* as it is for *the sparks,* the children of the coal, as the original expression signifies, *to fly upward.* Life and grief are congenial; but men who are born again seem as in a redoubled proportion to be *twice born to trouble;* with so many and so great evils are they as it were laden, beyond all other men, and that to such a degree, that they may seem sometimes to be oppressed with them. And if any think this is strange, surely, as the apostle expresses it, *he cannot see afar off;* at best, he only looks at the surfaces of things, and cannot penetrate far into those depths. For even the philosophers themselves, untaught by divine revelation, investigated admirable reasons for

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such dispensations of Providence, and undertook in this respect boldly to plead the cause of God. "God," says the Roman sage, "loves his own people truly, but he loves them severely! As the manner in which fathers express their love to their children is generally very different from that of mothers; they order them to be called up early to their studies, and suffer them not to be idle in those days when their usual business is interrupted, but sometimes put them on labouring till the sweat flows down, and sometimes by their discipline excite their tears; while the mother fondles them in her bosom, keeps them in the shade, and knows not how to consent that they should weep, or grieve, or labour. God bears the heart of a father to good men, and there is strength rather than tenderness in his love; they are therefore exercised with labours, sorrows, and losses, that they may grow robust: whereas, were they to be fattened by luxurious fare and indulged in indolence, they would not only sink under fatigues, but be burdened with their own unwieldly bulk." Presently after he quotes a remarkable saying of Demetrius, the cynic, to this purpose: "He seems to be the unhappiest of mankind, who has never been exercised with adversity, as he cannot have had an opportunity of trying the strength of his own mind." To wish to pass life without it is to be ignorant of one part of nature, so that I may pronounce thee to be miserable, if thou hast never been miserable. If thou hast passed through life without ever struggling with an enemy, no one, not even thou thyself, can know whether thou art able to make any resistance: whereas in afflictions we experience, not so much what our own strength is, as what is the strength of God in us, and what the aid of divine grace is, which often bears us up under them to a surprising degree, and makes us joyful by a happy exit; so that we shall be able to say, *My God, my strength and my deliverer.* Thus the Church becomes conspicuous in the midst of the flames, like the burning bush, *through the good will of him that dwelt in it.* And when it seems to be overwhelmed with waters, God brings it out of them, cleansed and beautified. He plunges it in the deep, and it rises fairer than before.

We will not here maintain that paradox of the stoics,

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that "evils which happen to good men are not to be called evils at all," which however is capable of a very good sense, since religion teaches us, that the greatest evils are changed, and *work together for good*, which comes almost to the same thing, and perhaps was the true meaning of the stoics. Banishment and poverty are indeed evils in one sense—they have something hard and grievous in them; but when they fall on a good and brave man, they seem to lay aside the malignity of their nature, and become tame and gentle. The very sharpness of them excites and exercises virtue: by exciting they increase it, so that the root of faith shoots the stronger, and fixes the deeper, and thereby adds new strength to fortitude and patience. And as we see in this example before us, affliction does by a happy kind of necessity, drive the soul to confess its sin, to flee as it were to seek its refuge under the wing of the divine goodness, and to fix its hope upon God. And this is certainly one great advantage which the pious soul gains by adversity, that it calls away the affections from earth and earthly things, or rather tears them away, when obstinately adhering to them. "It is necessary that they suffer such hardships as these," as one expresses it, "lest they should love this inconvenient stable in which they are now obliged to lodge, as if it were their own house." It is necessary that they should perceive that they are *strangers and foreigners upon earth*, that they may more frequently, and with more ardent desire, groan after that better country, and often repeat "*Dear home! Most desirable home!*" The children and heirs of the kingdom must be weaned by wormwood, lest they should be so enchanted by the allurements of the flesh and the poisonous sweetness of secular enjoyments, as to barter away the true and pure joy of their blessed hope, for this false, polluted, and deadly joy; and lest, dissolved in pleasure, the heaven-born soul should be broken under the yoke of this pernicious flesh, the root of so many passions. Lastly, we see how much vigour and vehemence affliction adds to prayer; for the divine psalmist, the deeper he sinks, cries to God in so much the louder accents; *Out of the depths have I cried.*

This prayer contains those precious virtues which, in a grateful temperature, render every prayer acceptable

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to God—faith, fervour, and humility—faith, in that he prays *out of the deeps;* fervour, in that *he cries,* and both again expressed in the next word; faith, as in the midst of surrounding calamities he does not despair of redress; fervour, as he urges it with repeated importunity, and the same word uttered again and again. And to complete all, humility expresses itself in what follows, where he speaks as one that felt himself sinking, as one who was plunged in a sea of iniquities, as well as calamities; and acknowledges he was so overwhelmed with them, as to be unable to stand, unless supported by pure mercy and grace. *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, who shall stand?* Thus here again faith manifests itself more clearly, together with its kindred affections of hope and charity, which, like three graces, join their hands, and by an inseparable union support each other. You have faith in the 4th verse, *There is forgiveness with thee;* hope in the 5th, *I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope;* charity in the 7th and 8th, where he does in a most benevolent manner invite all Israel to a communion of the same faith and hope, and, in order to confirm them more abundantly, does in a most animated manner proclaim the riches of the divine benignity. Such is the composition of this excellent prayer, which thus compounded, like a pillar of aromatic smoke from myrrh, frankincense, and every other most fragrant perfume, ascends grateful to the throne of God. And this you may take instead of the analysis of the remaining verses, which to handle by a more minute dissection of words, and to clothe in the trite phrases of the schools, to speak freely, would be as barren and useless as it is easy and puerile. And indeed I cannot but form the same judgment of the common way of catching at a multitude of observations from any scripture, and of pressing it with violence, as if remarks were to be estimated by number rather than weight, propriety, and use. But here let every one follow his own genius and taste; for we are willing to give the liberty we take.

Out of the depths. O the immortal power of divine faith, which lives and breathes in the midst of the waves, in which it may be plunged, but cannot be sunk under any of the hugest billows; but raises itself, and the soul in which it resides, and emerges and swims above all,

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like cork which will still be above water; having this in common with that divine love of which Solomon speaks in his song, that *many waters cannot quench it.* Whatever great things the stoics may speak of their wise men, and whatever all philosophy may say of fortitude, it is divine faith that truly and heartily performs all, by which the good man, though stripped of every help and comfort, wraps himself up as it were, not in his own virtue and strength, but in that of God; and hence it is that he cannot be conquered by any tyranny, by any threatenings, by any calamities of life, by any fear of death, for he leans upon Omnipotence. *The Lord,* says he, *is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?* Let *war arise,* let the enemy measure out his tents against me, I, says Faith, am secure *under the shadow of the Most High,* and embracing him, I will fear nothing.

You have here the psalmist crying with confidence out of the deeps. Behold also the prophet Jonah indeed, and, as we say, literally, *in the deeps,* and in circumstances which might have greater efficacy to shake his faith, than the sea itself, than the bowels of the fish, or any other depth into which he might be cast; as he was not entirely free from blame, but had the intermingling guilt of his own perverseness; yet, among all these discouragements, his faith is not swallowed up: *I have cried unto thee in my distress, and from the very belly of hell. Thou hast cast me into the deep, and all thy waves were going over me,* so that I might truly say, *I am cast out from thy sight;* yet, at the same time I said, *I will look again towards the temple of thy holiness.* I went down to the root and cavern of the mountains; the abyss surrounded me; yet, when my soul was thus *overwhelmed within me, I remembered the Lord.* You have, among others, an excellent example of faith in David, 1 Sam. xxv. When the invading enemy had burnt Ziklag, and carried the women captive, and the people, in the madness of their rage and grief, speak of stoning David himself, yet, besieged with all these miseries, he *strengthens himself in the Lord his God.* Nor can any thing have greater depth and strength than that expression of Job, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:* not only when fainting and dying, but while expiring, as it were, of the wound which I had

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received from the hand of God himself, yet will I hope for life and salvation from that very hand which has given me death, and in the jaws of death would send out this last word with the last breath, and with my departing soul, Destroy not, O Lord, one that trusteth in thee.

Nor is this confidence of a pious soul, an opinion fluctuating among the waves, or a light conjecture that it shall raise its head above them, but a certain, firm, and infallible assurance. That is a vulgar and weak word of comfort, "To-morrow may be better than to-day." But the language of divine faith is stronger and firmer, even when *deep calls unto deep*, and most certainly determines that it will not be in vain; and therefore, in the forty-second psalm, not dubious and trembling, but with a steady voice, he silences all the noisy tumults of an agitated mind, and says, *Repose thyself on God, for I shall still praise him*, or, as it may be rendered, *I am going to praise him;* amidst all those tempests which rage about me, I am thinking of that hymn of praise which I shall pay to him for my deliverance, and for the happy exit out of all my sorrows. Though at present we have nothing in sight but darkness, and whirlwinds, and rocks, and the raging foaming sea, let the skill and power of the great Pilot be opposed to all these. And what the psalmist says elsewhere of sailors, may evidently be applied to those who go down into the sea; they gain this by their dangers, that *they see the works* of this great Pilot in the abyss, and contemplate *his wonders in the deep*. And he who gives himself up to his care, and fixes his eye and hope wholly on him, though he be, or rather seem to be, shipwrecked, and lose all his goods, yet, if he does not *make shipwreck of faith*, he loses nothing that is properly his own. Nay, when he is swallowed up in the abyss of death, he does not perish, but swims through it to the further shore of eternity, where he finds a banquet, a palace prepared for him, and *a kingdom that cannot be moved*, but remains to endless ages.

I cried. Prayer is the natural and genuine voice of the children of God; and as the Latin word *oratio* properly signifies, articulate speech, as it distinguishes man from other animals, so, in this other signification, it expresses that by which the godly are distinguished from the rest of mankind: it is the proper idiom of the citizens of

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heaven. Others may recite some words of prayer, but they do not pray: as parrots and other birds, by the industry of their teacher, may learn to imitate human voices, yet they do not speak; there is something wanting in all their most skilful chattering, which is the very thing that is also wanting in the language of most that are said to pray, and that is, mind and meaning, affections correspondent to the words, or rather to which the words may conform, as to their original cause, and of which they may be the true index and sign. The spirit of this world knows not how to pray, nor does a *spirit of adoption and liberty* know how to forbear praying—the *spirit of adoption*, says the apostle, *by which we cry, Abba, Father*. Nor can they who are new-born by that Spirit, live without frequent prayer. Prayer is to them, as the natural and necessary respiration of that new and divine life, as Lam. iii. 56. *Turn not away from my breathing:* the Hebrew word there made use of, properly signifies the vital respiration of animals. Yet notwithstanding all this, what we said above is true, and evidently appears from the passage before us, that affliction often adds vigour to prayers, how lively and assiduous soever they may have been before. Let it be so, that prayer is the natural language of believing souls, by which they daily address their Heavenly Father, yet, when they are pressed with an uncommon pain or danger, it is no less natural, that this voice should be louder than ordinary, and should be raised into a cry. It is indeed the breath of faith and heavenly affections, and when they are vehemently pressed by any burden, and almost expiring under it, they breathe quicker than before, and with greater effort. Thus they who have been used to the greatest heights of daily devotion, yet, in surrounding calamities, pray more fervently and more frequently than ordinary. And this is to be numbered among the chief benefits attending afflictions, and it would surely be well worth our while to experience all the hardest pressures of them, if we may gain this; that the languor, and sloth, and stupidity, into which our minds and our souls are ready insensibly to sink while all is calm and serene about us, may be happily shaken off by something which the world may call an unhappy event; that some more violent gust of wind may fan the sacred flame that seems almost extinguished, and blow it up into greater ardour. It will

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be happy for us, that, with the psalmist, we should sometimes *sink in deep waters*, that so we, who in prosperity do but whisper or mutter out our prayers, may from *the depths cry aloud unto God*. O how frequently and how ardently did David pray in the deserts and the caves, and it is he who here cries out of the deep, and perhaps these deep recesses are those from which he was now crying; but when secure amidst the ease and delights of the court, and walking at leisure on his housetop, he was tempted by his own wandering eyes, and having intermitted the fervour of prayer, burned with impure fires. Our vows are cruel to ourselves, if they demand nothing but gentle zephyrs, and flowery fields, and calm repose, as the lot of our life; for these pleasant things often prove the most dangerous enemies to our nobler and dearer life.

O how true is that saying, that "faith is safe when in danger, and in danger when secure; and prayer is fervent in straits, but in joyful and prosperous circumstances, if not quite cold and dead, at least lukewarm!" O happy straits, if they hinder the mind from flowing forth upon earthly objects, and mingling itself with the mire; if they favour our correspondence with heaven, and quicken our love to celestial objects, without which, what we call life may more properly deserve the name of death!

Ver. 2. *Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.*

We see that he was not only in earnest, which comparatively few that pray are, but that his desires were vehement, and kindled into a flame, which is the case of yet fewer. The smoke of the incense will not rise to heaven, unless it be kindled on the altar; and hence it is that a great part of our prayers vanish like an empty sound, and are dissipated in the air. Nor is it wonderful, as we have elsewhere observed, that those petitions do not ascend, which hardly go out, which go not forth from the depth of the breast, and therefore they rise not on high, but are born and die upon the lips. How should they live, when they have no principle of life, neither the constancy of faith, nor the love of zeal? And if he who asks timorously, much more he that asks with cold indifference, may seem to bespeak a denial.

It is not the much speaking and the vain repetition

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condemned in the gospel, to redouble the same words again and again, provided it be not from want of care and affection, but if, on the contrary, it proceeds from the vehemence and exuberance of it. The great apostle tells us, that *he besought the Lord thrice;* and the Lord of the apostle and our Lord prayed in the garden again and again, *speaking the same words.* He that pours out his words, inattentively to what he is about, seems to me to pray long, if he utters but two sentences: though his words be ever so few and well chosen, yet is he himself foolish and verbose; for what can be more foolish than the empty noise even of the best words, when they express nothing of the mind? But he who continues long in prayer, and urges the same petitions again and again, bursting out from the fervour of an inflamed breast, he truly prays in a vivid and solid manner, and in a manner most acceptable to God; and what Fabius says of his orator, may with great propriety be applied to him, "It is the heart, and the energy of the mind, that makes a man truly eloquent."

Hear my voice. The great Author of nature and of all things, does nothing in vain. He instituted not this law, and, if I may so express it, art of praying, as a vain and insignificant thing, but endows it with a wonderful efficacy for producing the greatest and happiest consequences. He would have it to be the key by which all the treasures of heaven should be opened. He has constructed it as a powerful machine, by which we may, with easy and pleasant labour, remove from us the most dire and unhappy machinations of our enemy, and may with equal ease draw to ourselves what is most propitious and advantageous. Heaven and earth, and all the elements, obey and minister to the hands which are often lifted up to heaven in earnest prayer. Yea, all the works, and, which is yet more and greater, all the words of God obey it. Well known in the sacred scriptures are the examples of Moses and Joshua, and that which James particularly mentions, of Elijah, whom he expressly calls *a man subject to like infirmities with ourselves,* that he might illustrate the admirable force of prayer, by the common and human weakness of the person by whom it was offered. And that Christian legion under Antoninus is well known and justly celebrated, which, for the singular ardour and

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efficacy of its prayers, obtained the name of "the thundering legion."

It is true indeed, that our desires and our hearts are open to God, when our tongues are entirely silent, and that he has a paternal regard to all our concerns; nor do we utter our petitions to him, as if he were ignorant or negligent of our necessities and desires, for we well know that he sees and hears every thing. It is also true, that his counsels are all fixed and immoveable. But it can by no means be inferred from these premises, that the business of prayer is vain and needless. And if any one would represent these things as superseding prayer, surely he deceives himself, and by all his reasonings would make out nothing, unless it were to convict himself of a vast ingratitude to the Divine munificence, and a most shameful unworthiness of so excellent a gift.

Ought not this intercourse of men with God by prayer to be most reverently and gratefully received and cultivated by all, and numbered among the chief favours of the divine nature, and the chief dignities of the human nature? And truly this, as much as any thing that can be imagined, is a lamentable argument of the stupidity of man in this fallen state, that such an honour is so little regarded. Opportunities of conversing with nobles or princes of the earth are rare and short; and if a man of inferior station be admitted to such a favour, he glories in it, as if he were raised to heaven; though they are but images made of the same clay with himself, and only set upon a basis a little higher than the rest. But the liberty of daily and free converse with the King of heaven is neglected for every trifle, and indeed, is counted as nothing, though his very aspect alone fills so many myriads of blessed spirits above with full and perpetual felicity.

Again: is it not most reasonable to acknowledge, by this spiritual sacrifice of prayer, his infinite power and goodness, and that most providential care by which he governs all human affairs? And when our very being and life depend upon him, and all the comfort and happiness of life, how congruous is it to exhibit this sign and token of his holding us by the hand, and of our being borne up by him! Again;—what sweeter lenitive of all those miseries with which mortal life so continually abounds, can be invented, than this, to pour out all our

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care and trouble into his bosom, as that of a most faithful friend and affectionate father? Then does the good man lay himself down to sleep with sweet composure in the midst of waves and storms, when he has lulled all the cares and sorrows of his heart to sleep, by pouring out his prayer to God. And once more—how pleasant is it, that these benefits, which are of so great a value both on their own account and that of the divine benignity from whence they come, should be delivered into our hands, marked, as it were, with this grateful inscription, that "they have been obtained by prayer!"

Hear, O Lord. It is certain that the greater part of men, as they babble out vain, languid, and inefficacious prayers, most unworthy the ear of the blessed God, so they seem in some degree to set a just estimate upon them, neither hoping for any success from them, nor indeed seeming to be at all solicitous about it, but committing them to the wind as vain words, which in truth they are. But far be it from a wise and pious man, that he should so foolishly and coldly trifle in so serious an affair. His prayer has a certain tendency and scope, at which he aims with assiduous and repeated desires, and doth not only pray that he may pray, but that he may obtain an answer; and as he firmly believes that it may be obtained, so he firmly and constantly and eagerly urges his petition, that he may not flatter himself with an empty hope; for it cannot be, that any pious and reasonable desire should be directed toward the throne of God in vain, since he has been pleased to assume it among his titles, that he is *a God hearing prayer*. And certainly, though the good man does not always obtain the very thing that he asks, yet pure and right petitions never ascend in vain; but he who presents them either obtains the thing he asks, or receives, instead of what is pleasing, what is truly profitable, and instead of the things that he wishes for, those that are upon the whole the fittest and best, and that in the fittest and best time. Therefore the vehemence of prayer is to be attempered with patience and long suffering expectation. We often put ourselves, as it were, out of breath with the eagerness of speaking, and are presently weary, if we do not immediately obtain our request. Our prayers are often like those of the damsel who danced before Herod, *I will that thou presently give me* this or

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that. Whereas he that prays fervently urges this, that God would make haste to help him; but in the mean time, as he believes, he will not make haste, nor will he suffer, if the delay be ever so long, that a speech like that of the impious king of Israel should escape him, *This evil is of the Lord, and why should I wait for the Lord any longer?*

But O how necessary is it, that souls worshiping so pure a God should be purged from all the earthly dregs of impure affections! Most true is that oracle of the psalmist, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.* The hands must be *washed in innocence,* before they can be lifted up to him with acceptance. *Draw near to God,* says the apostle James, *and he will draw near to you;* but, in order to this, he subjoins, *Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye hypocrites,* or *ye double minded,* who are the impurest of all. These things we only briefly suggest; but I beseech you, that ye embrace this divine study, that you labour to obtain this sacred art, which is the best and only way of being enriched with all the most valuable blessings, even those of a celestial origin and tendency. O think, it is nothing unpleasant, nothing low and contemptible, to which you are now invited: on the contrary, there is nothing more delightful, nothing more sublime, than to meditate upon heavenly objects, to converse with God, and from thence to imbibe a contempt of this low and transitory world, to be raised above all perishing enjoyments, and to taste the prelibations of that celestial life itself.

But how accurately soever the precepts of this divine oratory may be delivered, none will effectually receive them, unless they are taught the skill by God himself. We must pray that we may be able to pray, and draw as it were from that superior academy, that faculty of pure and pious speech, which flies as with a swift, ready, and natural motion to heaven from whence it came, and brings down with it the most precious gifts into the bosom of the person that utters it. And, by the way, it is a most certain truth, that the greatest blessings are much more easily obtained from the great God, who is so munificent in his gifts, than others of a meaner nature; so that it were an argument of a low and abject mind, not to ask something noble and excellent. *Covet earnestly the best*

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gifts in this sense. If we ask only things of a low and trifling nature, unworthy such a Giver, he may answer as a prince did, "These are not royal gifts;" but if we ask those things that are most precious and valuable, grace and glory, there will be no room to fear that denial, "It is not fit for a man to receive it." *If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more your heavenly Father!* Surely he is goodness itself, and he gives only what is good; and the better those things are that we ask, the more freely and cheerfully does he bestow them. And you know Luke, repeating the same speech, expresses it by saying, *He shall give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it;* than which, nothing more noble can be either desired or bestowed.

Ver. 3. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*

AMONG all the virtues which are necessary to offer up our prayers with acceptance, none ascend with greater velocity, and rise higher, than that very humility which causes them, as it were, to descend the deepest of all; nor is there any more indubitable argument of humility, than a conscience which groans under the burden of its own sin and guilt amid all the abyss of calamities, crying especially from this depth. And thus we see the psalmist, while he involves all other evils, how great soever they might be, under one common title, fixed upon this, to expatiate upon it at large, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities,* &c. Thus if any one desires to mount more readily and more favourably from the depth of calamity, let him cry from this depth of profound humility, and plead a penitent sense of sin. For though of all imaginable depths, that of sin be the most remote from the most high and most holy God, yet the depth of the humble soul, depressed under the weight of sin, is nearest of all to the deep bowels of divine mercy; so that the words of the psalmist may not improperly be accommodated to this, though in a sense something different from that which in their connection they bear, *Deep calls unto deep,* and by an harmonious kind of antiphony, if I may be allowed the expression, they do most musically answer to each other.

One might have been ready perhaps to imagine, from

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the vehemence with which he begins his address, and from his groanings as it were so thick and so short, that he was a somewhat bold petitioner, and that he had some confidence in himself, seeing that he presumed to knock so often and so loud at the door of divine mercy; but what he here adds plainly shows that this was far from being the case: *Hear me, O Lord, hear me;* and I urge the request, because necessity presses urgently upon me. Not that I am or judge myself to be one who can merit thine assistance, but that I stand in such need of it, that if it be not granted me, I must perish. So far am I from being, or appearing to myself, worthy of thy help, that behold, I am overwhelmed with sin more than with sorrows. It is free mercy that I invoke, and I beseech thee, that in order to thy hearing the voice of my prayer, thou wouldst not hearken to the cry of my sins. Wash away the one, that thou mayst graciously smile upon the other; *for, if thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who shall stand?*— intimating, that if he were drawn out of the other depths, yet if his sins continued unremitted, he could find no place on which to stand; yea, if it were possible for him in that case to flee away and hide himself, yet he would rather plunge himself into those depths again, and would rather be buried and lost in floods of the greatest calamities, than meet the more dreadful flame of the divine anger and indignation.

But this humble acknowledgment of his own unworthiness and pollution is so far from being inconsistent with the pious confidence of prayer, that it is not only congruous but even congenial to it, and inseparable from it, so as to be most agreeable to that great King whom it addresses. Humility and contrition of heart are often thought by men to be the mark of a low and abject mind, and, as such, are often despised by them; but nothing is more honourable in the sight of God. "He," says Augustine, "will bow down his ear, if thou dost not lift up thy neck." There is certainly no more efficacious method of supplicating and obtaining grace, than to do it, if I may so speak, "sub formâ pauperis," confessing and pleading our poverty. He finds the most easy access in the court of heaven, who meets the most frequent repulses on earth. Nay, if I may so express myself, the heavenly court sits and resides in him. The two chief temples and palaces

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of the great King are that thrice holy place in the third heaven, and the humble and contrite heart upon earth. The best manner of praying, therefore, is that which is made up of faith, fear, and humility. By the equal libration of these wings, the soul mounts on high, while that of fear does not sink too low, nor that of confidence rise too high. By these, we are daily and early to soar to God; and care must be taken that these wings of the soul be not dragged down by excess, nor scorched by lust, nor clogged and glued together, as it were by covetousness, or any other terrene and viscid affection. But let us now a little more particularly see what this confession of the Prophet was.

If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? An uninstructed and incautious reader might perhaps imagine, that the psalmist was here seeking for refuge in a crowd, and desirous of sheltering himself under the common lot of human nature; at least, that he would endeavour to find some low excuse for himself, in the mention of its universal degeneracy. But the design of the sacred writer is far different from this. He confesses that whatever he or any other person, on a transient and inattentive glance, may imagine of his innocence, yet, when the eye of the mind is directed inward in a serious and fixed manner, then he sees the sum and bulk of his sins to be so immensely great, that he is even struck into astonishment by it, so that he finds himself beset, as it were, on every side with armed troops, which cut off all possibility of escape, otherwise than by flying to Divine mercy and to the freedom of pardoning grace. He perceives himself unable to bear the examination of an awakened conscience, exercising itself in impartial self-reflection; and arguing from thence how much less he would be able to endure the penetrating eye and strict scrutiny of the divine Justice, he cries out, in horror and trembling, under an apprehension of it, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* He sees himself overwhelmed with crimes, held at bay, as it were, by his sin son every side, which roar around him like so many savage creatures just ready to devour him. And he that does not see this to be his own case is either almost blind, or lives abroad, and never descends into his own breast. Gross offences alone strike the eye of our fellow

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creatures; but when we seriously consider that we have to do with an all-seeing Judge, who looks at once through every covering, and sees the most secret recesses of our hearts, who considers not only what may be concealed from men, but even what is concealed from ourselves, so as most clearly to discover every the least stain and speck of our inmost soul, and whose infinite holiness must also abhor it; is it possible that any one should be so infatuated as, in such a view, still to retain a false and foolish conceit of his own innocence? It cannot be doubted, that they who daily and accurately survey themselves and their own hearts, though they may indeed escape many of those evils which the generality of mankind, who live as it were by chance, fall into, yet in consequence of that very care and study, see so much the more clearly their own impurity, and contract a greater abhorrence of themselves, and a more reverential dread of the divine judgments. And it is certain, that the holier any one is, the viler will he be in his own eyes; and I may also add, the viler he is in his own eyes, the more dear, precious, and honourable will he be in the sight of God. But where is the heart, yea, I may say, where is the forehead of the generality of mankind, who boast of it as if it were some great matter to be free from the infamy of the most atrocious crimes? Have they not continually the reward of this their egregious virtue? "We have not committed murder and robbery," say they.—You are not gibbeted for the food of crows and ravens. But they who bring the whole of their conduct, their deeds and their words, the glances of their eye and all the inward workings of their affections, and examine them by the pure and strait rule of the divine law, so as to perceive how many and how great errors attend every most cautious day; and they who feel how wavering and weak their faith is, how lukewarm at least, if not cold their piety and charity, how ardent their love of this world still continues, how untamed the flesh, how unguarded the senses, how unbridled the affections, how attentive their hearts to trifles, while in prayer so light and so wandering; they, I say, who perceive and reflect on this, with what poignant grief, with what overwhelming shame must they be seized, and how earnestly and how justly will they cry out, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who shall stand?*

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If thou shouldst mark: if thou shouldst inquire and scrutinize, and then shouldst retain and impute (for the Hebrew word imports both); if thou shouldst inquire, thou wouldst find something of iniquity in the most righteous of mankind; and when thou hast found it, if thou shouldst retain it, and call him to an account for it, he could by no means free himself of the charge, or expiate the crime. Inquiring, thou wouldst easily find iniquity; but he by the most diligent inquiry will be able to discover no ransom, and therefore will be unable to stand, will have no place on which to set his foot, but will fall by the irresistible judgments of thy law, and the sentence of thy justice.

There have been great disputes one way and another, about the merit of good works; but I truly think they who have laboriously engaged in them have been very idly, though very eagerly, employed about nothing, since the more sober of the schoolmen themselves acknowledge there can be no such thing as meriting from the blessed God, in the human or, to speak more accurately, in any created nature whatsoever: nay, so far from any possibility of merit, there can be no room for reward any otherwise than of the sovereign pleasure and gracious kindness of God; and the more ancient writers, when they use the word merit, mean nothing by it but a certain correlate to that reward which God both promises and bestows of mere grace and benignity. Otherwise, in order to constitute what is properly called merit, many things must concur, which no man in his senses will presume to attribute to human works, though ever so excellent; particularly, that the thing done must not previously be matter of debt, and that it be entire or our own act, unassisted by foreign aid; it must also be perfectly good, and it must bear an adequate proportion to the reward claimed in consequence of it. If all these things do not concur, the act cannot possibly amount to merit. Whereas I think no one will venture to assert, than any one of these can take place in any human action whatever. But why should I enlarge here, when one single circumstance overthrows all those titles? The most righteous of mankind would not be able to stand, if his works were weighed in the balance of strict justice; how much less then could they deserve that immense glory which is now in question!

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Nor is this to be denied only concerning the unbeliever and the sinner, but concerning the righteous and pious believer, who is not only free from all the guilt of his former impenitence and rebellion, but endowed with the gift of the Spirit. The interrogation here expresses the most vehement negation, and signifies that no mortal, in whatever degree he is placed, if he be called to the strict examination of divine Justice, without daily and repeated forgiveness, could be able to keep his standing, and much less could he arise to that glorious height. "That merit," says Bernard, "on which my hope relies, consists in these three things—the love of adoption, the truth of the promise, and the power of its performance." This is the the threefold cord which cannot be broken.

Ver. 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

THIS is the genuine method of divine grace; it first demands a mind void of all confidence in itself, that so it may be filled with a pure and entire trust in God; for though that blind self-confidence, which is so natural to us, be flatulent and empty, yet while it possesses the mind, it is, as it were, blown up by it; and that swelling shakes off every thing more solid, and prevents its access even when it seems to surround us on every side. Yea, it seems that the riches and magnificence of divine grace cannot with so much decency communicate itself, when it is, as it were, straitened by the receiver; for since it is so great as to be able to fill every thing, it requires a free and ample space, in which to dilate itself. He who in the first original of the new born world, brought all things out of nothing, acts like himself in the regeneration and restoration of mankind to holiness. The Holy Spirit finds nothing but what is *without form and void;* and whoever of mankind perceive and acknowledge this to be their case, may be assured that the Spirit of God already begins to move upon them to impregnate the face of the abyss; and then it is said, *Let there be light, and there is light,* even that light by which they see themselves unformed and dark, and destitute of every thing that is good. It is a great sign of a soul beginning to emerge from its misery, to give up every hope of emerging from it, except

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that one which arises from free mercy alone. And in this sense, it may be truly said,

"The wretched find no safety but despair—"

that is despair in themselves, in their own righteousness or innocence, their own industry in fulfilling the law, or any expiation they can make for the breach of it. And what the apostle says of his own danger, may properly enough be applied to a confession of the soul, pressed under the burden of its own guilt. *We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.* For the exclamation before us bears a remarkable resemblance to that expression: *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* He who from justice found not any ground upon which he might stand, finds in mercy a place from which he may rise again. And this is the remedy of all our grief and distress, and in this sense we must be sick that we may recover, and must die that we may live. Grace exerts its power, where nature and art, and all the excellency and strength of human nature fail; nor does any soul celebrate the divine benignity more signally, than those who are snatched as it were out of the flames, when they are beginning to seize them, and being rescued from the very jaws of hell, return to life again, and breathe in the land of the living.

That trite distinction of sin into mortal and venial, which is so common among the schoolmen, is not only vain and destitute of all support from the word of God, but is indeed very faulty, and, far from being itself venial, well deserves to be exploded as mortal for that malignant influence which it has upon the morals of men. If the most open danger of the divine displeasure and of eternal death cannot hinder the bold race of men from rushing on headlong to every crime, and breaking all the barriers of duty which God has prescribed them, will it not add great licentiousness to all the crowd and tumult of headstrong desires, when some sins are said to be by their own nature, and in the whole kind of them, free from the condemning sentence of the divine law? But what I here oppose is this—give me the holiest man upon earth, the man who above all others stands at the remotest distance,

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both in the affections of his mind and in the conduct of his life, from those sins which they acknowledge as mortal, will he not deeply feel his need of daily forgiveness, from the multiplied pollutions of his daily infirmities? He truly accounts no sin little, which is committed against the great and ever blessed God, nor any pardon little which he knows to proceed from his infinite grace. Nor will he promise himself the pardon of the least fault which he indulges; nor will he despair of obtaining a pardon of the greatest for which he is truly penitent. And this is the law of grace. The poet said with a great deal of justice, that "no sinner is absolved by himself, because he is as it were turned informer against himself." Yet, in another sense, the sinner is absolved by that very self-accusation, and, sorrowing for his sins, is freed from the guilt of them; for it is not by any means to be conceived, that any one can return into favour with God, unless he return to God; nor that any one can return to God, unless he renounce every sin; which if he does, they are all entirely forgiven, and those which he eagerly desires to cast behind his back shall never rise up to condemn him to his face, before the tribunal of the divine Justice. This sentiment runs through all the evangelical discourses of the prophets, by which, as so many heralds, they call a rebellious people to return to the allegiance of God, their supreme King; *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.* Yea, the very Fountain of grace, the Lord of the prophets, who is himself the great author and the sum of the gospel doctrine, as soon as ever he came forth to publish this grace, said, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Nor can any mind, that is not fallen into utter madness and complete distraction, dream of a pardon, how ample and glorious soever, to be imparted to a sinner who will not repent or return. Nor indeed can it be so much as wished; for how unworthy would it be of the divine majesty and wisdom, to throw away such precious graces on those who so obstinately despise them!

But there is forgiveness with thee. With him there is a treasure of mercy laid up, to be imparted most freely and richly to every humble sinner that applies to him for it. Nor is the dispensing of grace in this way at all inconsistent with the richness and freeness of it, since the

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greatest sins, the most aggravated crimes, are absolutely forgiven, without any penalty or fine whatsoever imposed upon the offender, yet on this most reasonable and happy condition, that they who are thus received into the divine favour, should express their grateful acknowledgments for it, by love, obedience, and sanctity of life. Neither is this forgiveness the less free and gracious, because Jesus Christ, as our surety and redeemer, has paid the price of it, having been appointed for and destined to this great and arduous work by the Father; for what does that great Father of mercies herein, but, in order to our complete discharge, by one certain and ever to be admired way, satisfy himself of his own, by fastening his only begotten Son to the cross? The repository of this treasure is opened, the whole price is poured out at once, that great price of redemption, more precious than all the treasures, than all the mines of gold in the world, or even the whole world itself. But they who anxiously debate the point, whether God could simply and absolutely pardon sin without any price, do but trifle; for whatever may be supposed concerning that, who is there that will deny, that this way of the salvation of men which God has chosen, is so full of stupendous mystery, and so illustrious, if I may so speak, for the divine wisdom, justice, and mercy, that nothing can be thought of more worthy the divine majesty, nothing sweeter, nothing more munificent with respect to unworthy man? So that it will appear, Athanasius speaks very prudently when he says, "We ought not in this matter so much to consider the absolute power of God, as what is most advantageous to man, and what most worthy of the divine Being."

It was fit that our wise Creator should give us a law, and that law was both useful and pleasant to those who would carefully observe it; but when once violated, there would necessarily arise a fatal enmity between the law and the transgressors of it, an enmity which would continually become progressive, and gather new strength in the progress. But as for our obstinacy, what is it more than *to kick against the pricks?* The law is inviolably safe in its own sanctity, dignity, and immortality; but we, by striving against it, what do we gain but iniquity, disgrace, and death? So that if there were no umpire to interpose, there would be no hope, but that the whole

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human kind should perish. But that blessed and efficacious Intercessor came from on high; and certainly he was himself a divine person, who could compose such a controversy, and who joining, by an indissoluble union, his infinitely better with our miserable and mortal nature, did so, by a most wonderful method, render to the law all its accuracy of obedience, and to us, though guilty, impunity. And having thus made peace, that concord might afterwards continue and prevail, he animates all who partake of this blessed peace by his own new, pure, and divine Spirit, that they might not only be engaged sincerely to endeavour to observe diligently the sacred precepts of the law, but might love them and cordially embrace them. At the same time he hath tempered the severity of the law towards all those that are received into favour, that their diligent, pious, and affectionate observance of the law, though not entirely complete, should by our indulgent Father be most graciously accepted, even as if it were perfect. And so the honour of the divine Legislator is secure among men, and his peace descends upon them: and this is what our text observes, *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*

It is well known, that the *fear of God* is commonly used in scripture to signify, not only the whole of his worship, but all pious affections whatsoever, and consequently the whole of true religion. And some translate the expression here, *That thou mayest be reverently worshiped;* and it is thus used with the greatest propriety. I speak of that fear which is so far from denoting the servile, hostile dread and terror which some might think of, that, on the contrary, it entirely excludes it, being properly a reverence tempered with love. Yet I do not think that we are to exclude all dread of punishment and vindictive justice under the name of a servile and disingenuous fear; nay, I apprehend such a fear to be very necessary even to those who most ardently love, so long as they live in the flesh, in order to tame and rein in the petulancy of it; yea, love itself places fear as a kind of bit and bridle to the flesh. *My flesh trembles for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments. Let us serve God with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.* This is the fear which is called *the*

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beginning of wisdom, and which is marked with other very high titles of honour in the sacred scriptures; without which we can neither conceive the beginning of divine worship and true piety, nor pursue the improvement of it.

As this holy and pure fear is the compendium and summary of religion, so this pardon and free remission of sins is the great foundation and support of that fear and religion. As the whole human race is defiled with sin, the despair of pardon would entirely drive us away from God, and precluding all ways of returning, would plunge the offender headlong into eternal banishment and eternal hatred.

With thee is forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared, that men may not dread thee, and flee thee as an inexorable judge and enemy, but may reverence, love, and serve thee as a mild and gracious Lord, as a most merciful and loving Father. And this is that joyful message of the gospel, to which sinners run, as soon as they hear and understand it, prostrating themselves with all humility at the feet of so mild a Lord and so gracious a King; for "no one," as Ambrose says, "will think of repenting but he who hopes for indulgence." This merciful God calls back to his favour, those who are as it were flying from it, saying, *Return, ye apostates and rebels, and I will pardon and heal your backslidings!* and they, as if their bowels sounded to the unison note of mercy, with reciprocal penitence and love, answer, *Behold we come unto thee, for thou art Jehovah our God.* And this is what the great Messenger, and Author of our salvation preached and set forth: *Repent*, says he, *for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* You are not now pursued by wrath and vengeance, threatening utterly to extirpate you and cut you off, but *the kingdom of heaven*, the dispensation of love, mercy, and grace, opens its bosom to embrace you, and freely offers you the full pardon of all your former obstinacy and rebellion. Behold the compassionate Father meeting that prodigal son, who had so basely run from him, while yet afar off on his return, and, instead of chiding and upbraiding him, burying not only all his sins, but even his very confession, as in a deluge of love, amidst the tenderest embraces, kisses, and tears. *Make me to hear*, says David, *the voice of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.* By that lamentable fall, he had as it were dashed

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himself against the rock of divine justice, so that all his bones were broken; but what a *voice of joy and gladness* is that, which should restore full soundness and strength to bones which had thus been crushed and shattered to pieces! Surely it is no other voice than that so often used by our Saviour in the gospel, *Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.* That was the *grace*, softer than oil, sweeter than roses, *which flowed from his lips* into the sinner's wounds, and which being poured into the contrite heart, not only heals but blesses it, yea, and marks it out for eternal blessedness. But alas! the greater part of sinners sleep in their misery, and though their distempers are mortal, feel them not. It is therefore no great wonder, that this grace, this precious, this invaluable remedy is despised by them. But O how sweet is the voice of pardon to a soul groaning under the burden of sin!

"Sweet as the living stream to summer thirst."

But, as one well expresses it, "he that has never known discomfort, knows not what consolation means.

Men of this world, entangled in the cares of life and in its crimes, insensible of misery, attend not to mercy." But if any who imagine themselves partakers of this forgiveness, do not at the same time feel their hearts struck with a pious fear of the divine majesty, let them know, that their joys are all self-invented dreams, since it is for this very end that *there is forgiveness with God*, even *that he may be feared.*

In the remainder of this psalm, the author asserts his confidence in God, and labours to confirm and establish that of all true believers.

Ver. 5. *I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*

6. *My soul waiteth for the Lord, more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning.*

7. *Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.*

8. *And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*

I wait for the Lord. With thee is mercy. They who

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heartily believe this are drawn by that sweet and amiable force of desire to be partakers of it. And certainly, there is no true faith in the doctrine of salvation, unless it be attended with this magnetic force by which it draws the soul to God. One would think it were impossible, where this effect is not produced, that there should be so much as an historical faith; and surely it is contrary and inconsistent with the rational nature, to see so desirable and excellent a good laid down before us, and freely offered, without running most freely to embrace it with open arms, and an ardent impetuosity of soul.

The faith therefore of vulgar and merely nominal Christians is quite dead, and deserves not the name of faith at all. I mean, that which is not sufficient to excite them earnestly to desire and expect that divine grace in which they say they believe. True and lively faith is the eye of the inner man, which beholds an infinitely amiable God, the lucid and perpetual Fountain of grace, and is by the view immediately kindled into most fervent love. That divine light which is sent from heaven into the soul, is the vehicle of heat too, and, by its ardent rays, presently sets the heart on fire: the flame rises sublime, and bears all the affections of the mind with it, towards that consummate beauty which it renders visible.

When a philosopher was asked, why that which is fair attracts our love, he answered, "It is the question of a blind man." Well then might the psalmist, when he had been contemplating the divine goodness, represent himself as quite transported with its charms. It is nothing earthly, nothing mortal, that is the object of my wish; my soul hangs on the Lord alone. It thirsts for thee, and till it arrives at the enjoyment of thee, it will still be waiting. Hasten, Lord, to support and comfort me, for I am sick with love; nor is there any thing in heaven or earth, beside thee, O Lord, which can satiate or delight this soul of mine, pierced through, as it were, with this sacred passion. And though I am, and feel myself to be, most unworthy of loving thee or of hoping ever to enjoy thee, yet my meanness and vileness, even when compared with thine immense majesty and sublimity, do not so much deter me, as thy boundless clemency and goodness, added to thy truth, while I have thy word of promise before mine eyes for my support, sustain me and animate

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my courage. Therefore, while my love and desires are most ardent, I will nevertheless expect and wait with inward patience and perseverance; and though a heart which loves like mine must find a delay grievous, yet, unshaken hope shall alleviate that sickness of the soul. Just *as they that watch for the morning*, however they may be afflicted with the darkness and coldness of the night, are constantly supported with the assured hope that the dawn will come, and the day arise in all its glory.

Nor does the psalmist envy others their share in those felicities which arise from love and hope; on the contrary, with a cheerful and liberal mind, he invites all to this immense ocean of riches, which is not shut up, but free to all. *Let Israel hope in the Lord.* And lest the confluence of such vast numbers should suggest any fears of straitness and want, he confidently declares that there is wealth enough, and more than enough, to supply all their necessities: *for with the Lord*, says he, *there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption;* grace rich and copious enough to support all sinners, and to forgive all sins; and all that apply to it shall infallibly find, that *he redeems Israel from all his iniquities.* The eye of faith is by no means evil, but bright and sparkling with unbounded charity: it wishes all good to all, and above all, wishes them a beatific union with the supreme and infinite Good. As in that kingdom of glory, there is no malignity, no envy, because there can be no straitness, but, according to that emphatical saying of our blessed Saviour, *there are many mansions*—there is boundless space, and the seats of pious souls are not marked out in any narrow boundaries, but in an ample court; so, even in the previous kingdom and banquet of grace, our heavenly Father's house is magnificent, both on account of its amplitude, and the rich provision which it contains.

Let me beseech you therefore strictly to examine your own souls. Inquire what it is that they chiefly wish, hope, and desire; whether they give chase, as it were, to every painted fly; whether, *forsaking the Fountain of living waters*, they are digging for themselves cisterns of clay, and those leaky too, with great and unprofitable labour. O wretched deceitfulness of every earthly hope, which mocks and deludes us so much the more in proportion to the extravagance of its promises! Blessed are

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they, and only they, who fix their eyes and their souls above, and say with the psalmist, *Lord, I wait on thee, my soul doth wait, and in thy word do I trust;* and, as elsewhere, *And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.* Happy they who have quitted all those low desires and pursuits, which are unworthy of a generous and immortal spirit, and have fixed their love on one; whose heart and hopes are set upon that one, in whom all things excellent meet and centre. A cheerful joy always shines on their face; nor do their cheeks glow with the shame of repulse and disappointment. While we are wandering hither and thither, in the vicious and perplexed pursuit of flattering objects, what frequent lamentations, what fond complaints of delusive fortune, and that tragical outcry of grievous and painful wounds! What crowds of fears and cares divide the mind and hurry it, now one way, and now another! But when we fix our hope and our heart on the only support, on the only true and all sufficient Good, all is safe, and the soul treads firm while the whole globe trembles. Let external things be borne this way or that, there is peace within; nor, when all methods have been examined, can any other be found for the establishment of the mind, than that it should lay all its stress upon the one immoveable and immutable Rock.

FINIS.

C. and C. Whittingham, Chiswick.

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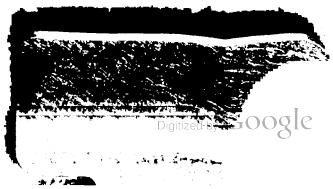
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